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BERIA. THE FATE OF THE ALL-POWERFUL PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER

WHY I TAKEN THIS BIOGRAPHY

For more than half a century, the figure of Lavrenty Beria has remained one of the darkest symbols of the Stalin era. His very name has become synonymous with the word "executioner". Shortly after the execution of Lavrenty Pavlovich, the term "Berievism" was even put into circulation. So they began to call the period from the end of the 30s, from the moment Beria came to the leadership of the NKVD, and until the fall of the "Lubyansk Marshal" in the cold summer of the 53rd. This was done by analogy with the "Yezhovshchina" in order to hang all the repressions that took place at that time on Beria.

During his lifetime, Lavrenty Pavlovich was an object of worship, first, in the 30s, in Georgia and the Transcaucasus, and after moving to Moscow in 1938, throughout the entire Soviet Union. In Transcaucasia, he was presented as the most devoted of the Caucasian supporters of Stalin. In Moscow, he became one of the leaders whose portraits the working people carried at demonstrations and whose name was given to collective farms and mines, streets and partisan detachments. Interestingly, after the death of Stalin, Lavrenty Pavlovich achieved the adoption of a special resolution of the Presidium of the Central Committee that portraits of leaders should no longer be worn at demonstrations. Then he was blamed for it. Pioneer organizations were also named after Beria. He never seemed to object to this. There was even this verse:

Today is a holiday for the guys, the pioneer rejoices, Today Lavrenty Palych Beria came to visit them.

That's just such an honor as the name of the city in his honor, Beria, unlike his predecessor Yezhov, was not awarded. Few people remember that there was once a city on the map of our homeland

Yezhovo-Cherkessk, at the end of 1938, suddenly and without any noise, turned simply into Cherkessk.

A particularly strong cult of Beria was in Georgia. And here Lavrenty Pavlovich had something to love for. After all, being the head of the party organization of Georgia and Transcaucasia, he did a lot for the development of his native republic and the Transcaucasian region as a whole, and especially his native republic. Taking advantage of the favor of Stalin, who was not indifferent to fellow Georgians, Beria was able to achieve concessions with planned deliveries of agricultural products, and, conversely, he managed to get more funds to provide the inhabitants of Georgia with essential goods. Not without the efforts, of course, of the party propaganda apparatus, Lavrenty Pavlovich enjoyed great popularity in Georgia. This is recognized by people who are not at all close to him, moreover, ideological opponents who have never experienced any sympathy for the head of the state security agencies. Dissident R.I. Pimenov, who spoke in the Vladimir prison with former associates of Lavrenty Pavlovich, recalled: "Behind Beria stood a whole people who loved him, and in 1952 in the Caucasus mountains I was present at drinks where the first toast was proclaimed for Beria, and only the second for

Stalin".

And also, Konstantin Simonov, who did not at all sympathize with Beria, in his memoirs, nevertheless, admits that when in 1948-1953 he spent his vacation in Abkhazia, in the places where Beria was born, he was convinced that he had rather big authority there. Konstantin Mikhailovich claims: "Having met there with many Abkhazians and many Georgians, I knew about the activities of Beria, when he was in the Caucasus, about what influence he had there, in the Caucasus, primarily in Georgia, and after when he left for Moscow, he knew about all this much more than other people who did not live there.

And then, realizing that he seemed to have praised Beria, Simonov poured a bucket of dirt on Lavrenty Pavlovich: "Here and there I had to deal with memories of disappeared families, of people who died, were knocked out of life in Georgia, among party workers and among intelligentsia - this was before Beria was transferred to Moscow to the role of a person correcting Yezhov's mistakes.

My interlocutors were by no means talkative, and the time was not conducive to such talkativeness, but all the same, one thing or another broke through in them. And I gradually formed a fairly complete idea that, before blessing the survivors and releasing them from the camps and prisons after Yezhov, Beria mowed down Georgia cleaner than Yezhov Russia, and in some detail of the stories about the events of the thirty-sixth - in the thirty-seventh and earlier years, something terrible flashed through, connected with revenge and with the settling of personal scores by him. Two or three of my Abkhaz friends, obviously trusting me completely, told me terrible things connected with Beria's arbitrariness in Abkhazia, with the death of many people there. Some of this was believed, something was not believed, it seemed so wild then, in those years, long before the trial of the Beria case at the plenum of the Central Committee, before the trial of him and before the Twentieth Congress. Sometimes I didn't believe or didn't fully believe in something that later, a few years later, it would be strange not to believe from the very first words.

That's what I don't believe. I don't believe that the Georgian and Abkhaz comrades confidentially shared with a visiting Moscow writer, and even a candidate for membership in the Central Committee of the party, their sorrows that the then member of the Politburo and deputy chairman of the USSR government in his native Georgia was worse than Yezhov and corny settling scores with objectionable . As we shall see later, even a carelessly spoken word that it was not Comrade Beria himself who wrote the epochal work signed in his name on the history of the Bolshevik organizations in Transcaucasia ended for the "anti-party talkers" in a very unpleasant trial in the Central Control Commission.

As for the talk about people who disappeared during the Great Purge, Simonov must have heard even more such rumors in his native Moscow or Leningrad. And in any region and republic where the writer visited, he could not help but notice the mass disappearance of people, at least among his close friends. In this regard, Georgia is no different from other regions of the country.

And as for the repressions before the year 37, Simonov exaggerated the colors and generally created the impression in the inexperienced reader that Lavrenty

Pavlovich, long before the Great Purge, spent the party and economic assets of Georgia and especially Abkhazia. But that's not the case at all. In the late 20s, and especially in the early 30s, in connection with collectivization, Beria, as the head of the Georgian GPU and the head of the secret operational unit, and in 1931, also as the chairman of the Transcaucasian GPU, had to suppress numerous uprisings of peasants - in Azerbaijan, Adzharia, in the same Abkhazia. R.I. Pimenov recalls that his Menshevik cellmate Simon Gogiberidze participated in the uprising in Abkhazia, which Beria suppressed in his time, and at the end of his life ended up in the same prison with the Beriaites.

But in his actions against the anti-Soviet rebels, Beria was not original. In the same way, before collectivization, the Chekists suppressed uprisings in Siberia and the Ukraine, Central Asia and Kazakhstan, the Don and the Kuban. But there is no reliable evidence that both then and later, in 1937-1938, Lavrenty Pavlovich was more cruel than his fellow Chekists and heads of party organizations in other republics, territories and regions. There is also no convincing evidence that during the Great Purge the scope of repression in Georgia exceeded the average Soviet level. Maybe even a little smaller than him. But the merit in this is rather not Beria, but Stalin. Iosif Vissarionovich remembered his homeland, loved his countrymen and reduced the orders sent down from Moscow to "enemies of the people" for Georgia. And besides, it would be inconvenient for Stalin to appoint a person who himself showed excessive zeal in carrying out repressions to correct Yezhov's "excesses". Excessive zeal in this matter could serve as a pretext for repression against a too zealous performer in the field. This happened, for example, with the head of the Ukrainian Communists, Petr Petrovich Postyshev. Removed from the post of the first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine and appointed first secretary of the Kuibyshev regional committee, he broke all records for the arrests of "enemies of the people", after which he himself was safely arrested and shot. As for Beria, I repeat, no.

there is no evidence that in Georgia the repressions in 1937 and in the first half of 1938, when he was at the head of local communists, were of particular scope.

During the Great Patriotic War, the name and photograph of Beria often appeared in the central press, as a member of the State Defense Committee and the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. After the war, Lavrenty Pavlovich became a full member of the Politburo and deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers. Portraits of him were carried at demonstrations in all cities of the country, collective farms and state farms continued to be named after him. However, Lavrenty Pavlovich was no orator, he made speeches, in comparison with other leaders, rarely, and his kind of activity was not conducive to publicity. After all, Beria headed the top-secret Special Committee, which was engaged in the development and production of nuclear weapons. Therefore, he was less known in the country than such colleagues in the Politburo as Molotov, Zhdanov, Khrushchev, and especially Malenkov, Stalin's semi-official heir in the late 40s and early 50s. Ironically, the most detailed material ever published about Beria in the Soviet press until the end of the 80s is a report on the consideration of his case by the Special Judicial Presence and on the execution of the death sentence on him and his comrades.

And after his arrest and execution, Lavrenty Pavlovich began to be perceived by the Soviet and world community as a uniform fiend, responsible for almost all the crimes that were happening in our country in the 30-50s. And even the kids sang a cheerful ditty: "Lavrenty Palych Beria did not justify the trust, and Georgy Maksimych Malenkov kicked him." But pretty soon this ditty was under an unspoken ban - after Georgy Maximilianovich Malenkov was already kicked by Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev. But with regard to Beria, everything remained the same. "Cannibal", "English spy", "adventurer", "executioner" - these are the most common definitions.

Even Beria was painted and is still being painted as the greatest debauchee of all times and peoples. It turns out a sort of cross between Don Juan and Bluebeard. Since almost all of his partners took possession of either force or threats, promising, in which case, to send him to where Makar did not drive calves.

Sometimes, however, rumor attributed such inclinations not only to Beria, but also to his associates. Academician A.D. Sakharov claimed: "I remember Beria's deputy Dekanozov, the ambassador to Germany, who loved to drive a car through the streets of Moscow, looking for women, and immediately raped them right in his huge car in the presence of security and a driver. Beria himself was more intelligent. He liked to walk near his house on the corner of Malaya Nikitskaya and Vspolny and pointed to women guards ("secretaries"), then they were brought to him, and he forced them to cohabit. After the suicide attempt of one of his fourteen-year-old victims, Beria spent the whole night near her bed (but the girl died)".

It is curious that Andrei Dmitrievich here attributed to Vladimir Georgievich Dekanozov, who was actually shot along with Beria, the honor of being his deputy in the NKVD, which in reality was not. Dekanozov was Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, i.e.

Molotov, and was arrested when he was the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia. The most interesting thing is that Sakharov did not turn Beria, but Dekanozov into a lustful cat-rapist (popular rumor usually assigns this role to Beria). Lavrenty Pavlovich in the "father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb" looks like just a man abusing his high official position in order to force cohabitation of girls and young women he likes. At the same time, however, his vileness is enhanced by the seduction of a minor who, out of desperation, commits suicide.

Here it is necessary to make a reservation. During the 1953 investigation, only Beria was charged with rape, forced cohabitation and seduction of minors. This decanose's cup had passed, which, however, was little consolation for him. But there is no information about the fact that one of the schoolgirls who fell victim to Beria's lust committed suicide. Therefore, it is very difficult to say which of what was said and written, including during the investigation, about Lavrenty Pavlovich's connections with women, corresponds to the truth. Although Beria, of course, was not a monk.

Only with the beginning of Gorbachev's perestroika did some ambiguity arise in Beria's assessment. Archives gradually began to open, more or less frank directives of that

era. And it turned out that after Stalin's death, Beria became the initiator of the rehabilitation of those who were arrested in the "doctors' case" and in some other high-profile cases that arose in the post-war years. Lavrenty Pavlovich also proposed the unification of Germany, for which he was ready to sacrifice socialism in the GDR, normalize relations with Yugoslavia, advocated a truce in Korea. He insisted on granting greater independence to the Union republics, increasing the role of national personnel and languages in them. Beria achieved the closure of a number of grandiose, but obviously unprofitable and environmentally questionable construction projects. And he also advocated the abolition of propiska and managed to almost halve the camp population due to a broad amnesty. And Lavrenty Pavlovich also defended something completely revolutionary - the transfer of the center of power from party bodies to Soviet ones. In a word, Beria turned out to be the forerunner of what, to one degree or another, began to be carried out under Gorbachev! It was time to wonder and think! But Gorbachev's perestroika very quickly ended with the collapse of the USSR and communist rule, although it spared the initiator of the changes. Beria's perestroika only led to the imminent death of its creator.

Already in the 90s, the memoirs of the son of Lavrenty Beria Sergo and the last surviving member of the Beria, Lieutenant General of State Security Pavel Anatolyevich Sudoplatov, who was convicted in the case of an imaginary Beria conspiracy, were published. In these books, and especially, naturally, in the work of his son, Lavrenty Pavlovich appears almost like a knight without fear and reproach. But our society did not accept such Beria either. It was too well known that behind Beria - not only good deeds, such as the release from prison of those who did not have time to be shot under Yezhov, but also real crimes, like Katyn. Although it was the whole truth about Katyn, told only in 1993, that showed that not only and not even so much Beria was involved in the execution of Polish officers and civilian "socially alien" persons -

performer, but also practically the entire Politburo of that time, headed by Stalin, which made a fundamental decision on the execution.

Yes, Beria, of course, was not an angel. But it is hardly fair to call him the devil. It would be more correct to say that Lavrenty Pavlovich, like his colleagues in the Politburo, was one of the petty demons under the devil Stalin.

What kind of person was Beria? You have to fantasize about this. No memories of childhood and youth friends, school teachers and university teachers, relatives and friends (with the exception of Sergo), and colleagues (with the exception of Sudoplatov) have come down to us. During the life of Beria, writing memoirs about him, as well as about other members of the Politburo, with the exception of Stalin, was not accepted. After the arrest and execution of "the Lubyanka Marshal, only a madman would have dared to write about him in the USSR. In the memoirs of a number of military leaders, as well as most of the scientists involved in the atomic project, if Beria is mentioned, then only as a person who interfered with everything and always threatened everyone " let out the guts. "Some exception here is the memoirs of academician Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, as well as the evidence of another "atomic academician" - Yuli Borisovich Khariton, which appeared at the end of perestroika. There, Beria is recognized for a certain organizational talent, although the unsympathetic features of his personality are not denied. Indeed, would Stalin endure in office

deputy chairman of the GKO, and then - the head of the atomic, hydrogen and rocket projects of mediocrity and pest. After all, the political future of Iosif Vissarionovich himself and the great country headed by him largely depended on the implementation of this project.

Much in the image of Beria, we still have to think out by analogy with those who lived at the same time as him and occupied approximately the same position in the socio-political structure of society. And at the same time, I would like this book to be not just a biography of Beria, an attempt to understand the fate of this infamous man without anger and predilection, but also a story about the life of our country during those more than three decades when Lavrenty Pavlovich played in her active political role. Probably, Beria is not the prettiest character in Russian and world history. But even the unsympathetic have the right to an objective biography instead of the scathing pamphlets that have appeared so far. I wanted to unravel the secret of the soul of the "Lubyansk Marshal", to try to understand what he thought when he shot the innocent, when he created the most destructive weapon of the twentieth century, did he feel remorse, did he feel sorry for his victims, did he rejoice when it fell to his lot to let out prison of the innocent. I tried to understand what goal Lavrenty Beria pursued in life, whether it changed during his not too long 54-year life path. And to tell about both the villainy and the good deeds of my hero, without hushing up either the crime or the victory. And it is up to the reader to decide what deeds of Lavrenty Pavlovich will outweigh on the scales of history.

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NOT YET A POLITICIAN

On March 29 (and according to the old style - March 17), 1899, in the mountain village of Merkheuli in Abkhazia, not far from Sukhumi, the son Lavrenty was born in the family of Pavel Beria and Marta Jakeli. Although the village was in Abkhazia, only Mingrelians lived there. Now, after the Georgian-Abkhaz war of the 1990s, they no longer live. Maybe only partisans from the Georgian "White Legion" visit.

As Lavrentiy's son Sergo testifies: "I remember my grandfather Pavel vaguely. I still remember my grandfather's black cloak, hood, and even stories about himself, an extremely hardworking and active person." Lavrenty's parents were Mingrelians - this is a special ethnic group of Georgians, to which the Georgians themselves are treated with disdain. Pavle was a poor peasant, and Martha was from the impoverished nobles. She was even a distant relative of the princes of Dadiani, the former feudal rulers of Mingrelia. However, the Jakely family had long since gone bankrupt, and Martha was as poor as her husband. Pavle was a peasant, but never got out of need. Martha worked as a sewer, and this gradually became the main source of family income. Martha later told Sergo's grandson that he conquered her, widowed early, Pavle with courage and beauty. Three children were soon added to the daughter and son from the first marriage. But the fate of all three was unfortunate. The eldest son died of smallpox at the age of two. Daughter Anna, after suffering an illness, forever remained deaf and mute. The parents pinned all their hopes on their second son, Lawrence. To

to give him an education, his father even sold half of his house. The future chief of the NKVD was assigned to the Sukhum real school. At the age of 15, Lavrenty graduated with honors. In order for him to enter the Baku Mechanical and Construction Technical School, his father had to sell the second half of the house and move to a squalid hut.

The childhood of young Beria was, frankly, not enviable. Although, probably, the scarcity of available fun, entertainment and gifts was brightened up for him by sincere parental love. But what exactly was Lavrenty in childhood, we don't know anything. Was he a fighter, ringleader, chieftain of the children's gang? Or, on the contrary, was the future chief of the NKVD a quiet boy who preferred books to cheerful fun with friends and often became victims of local bullies? Everyone is free to think whatever they want about this. Although, as we will see later, Lavrenty Pavlovich did not have a special inclination for books, at least in his mature years. So, in all likelihood, he preferred noisy games with peers. And given the hot temperament, strong will and the ability to select intelligent assistants that manifested itself later, one must think that already in childhood Beria knew how to put together a company of friends around him who unquestioningly obeyed him.

There is also no information about Lavrenty's relationship with his parents. Did Pavle beat him, or, on the contrary, did he make sure that not a single hair fell from his son's head? A lot of evidence has been preserved that later, being at the head of the punitive department, Lavrenty Pavlovich, if not with his own hand, then forced his subordinates to beat those under investigation in his presence, knocking them out of

recognition of them, whether it be the famous Marshal Vasily Blucher or the young diplomat Yevgeny Gnedin - the son of the well-known mediator between the Bolsheviks and the German authorities, the Social Democrat Alexander Parvus (Gelfand). It would be tempting to explain excesses of this kind by sadistic tendencies developed under the influence of beatings in the family. But no, since Pavle, for the sake of his son's education, was ready to sacrifice the most precious thing that a poor Georgian peasant had - a house, somehow it is hard to believe that he beat Lawrence at the same time and could generally raise his hand against his son. Although the young Beria, quite possibly, gave rise to his father's anger.

However, it cannot be ruled out that in fact Pavle Beria was not as poor as his grandson Sergo imagines. He was hardly a fist or a nobleman, since such a compromising fact would not have been missed to be used against him in 1953, and in the official report on the Beria case, not a word was said about the unsuitable social origin of the defeated "Lubyansk Marshal" (or in six months the investigation did not have time to get to the roots?). But Pavle, perhaps, was a strong middle peasant. Then, in order to give his son an education, the house, probably, did not have to be sold.

And I think Lavrenty Pavlovich ordered those under investigation to be beaten with purely pragmatic goals - to knock out a confession of non-existent guilt and close the case as soon as possible in order to please Stalin. Then everyone in the NKVD did this - from ordinary lieutenant investigators to state security commissars. Yes, and in the Red Army, a marshal or general, especially in the Great Patriotic War, to go in the face of a subordinate general or colonel was a common thing.

And here is what the author of the first unbiased biography of the "Lubyansk Marshal" Nikolai Zenkovich writes: "I visited the village near Sukhumi, where he was born. Until recently, old people lived there, who remember him as a teenager. In the stories of fellow countrymen, he appears as a capable, naturally smart boy" . It would be tempting to write off the fact that this boy then had to do dirty work for a while. But let's not forget that every person has freedom of choice. As we shall see later, after the end of the civil war, Beria had the opportunity to choose a "normal" civilian profession for himself, but he, although not without hesitation, preferred the seductive, but also dangerous Chekist path.

What is surprising: the one who was later represented as a "bloody executioner" and "cannibal", and who really ruined tens of thousands of human lives, seems to have believed in God. Sergo Beria testifies: "My father dreamed of architecture and was himself a good artist. I remember one story related to my childhood. I never became a believer, although I have deep respect for religion. And then, as a boy, I was a militant atheist and once he broke an icon... Grandmother Marta was very upset, she was a believer and helped the church and parishioners until the end of her life.

Returning from work, my father cooled my atheistic ardor and... painted a new icon. I remember that conversation for a long time: "Other people's beliefs must be treated with respect."

It is unlikely that Sergo Lavrentievich invented this episode. If only because, as it seems, being an atheist, he did not fully understand the meaning

of what had happened and remained convinced that his father did not believe in God, but respected the religious faith of others. However, the episode with the icon, if it is not invented (and it is difficult to invent it), clearly proves that Lavrenty Pavlovich was a believer. In principle, it is impossible for an unbelieving icon painter to paint an icon, because then it will not have any spiritual power, and prayers addressed to it will lose all meaning. Beria Sr. could not help but know this and would hardly have planted such a pig for his beloved mother as a picture instead of an icon. This means that he retained faith in God, and his mother knew about it. Another thing is that, while holding high party and Chekist posts, Lavrenty Pavlovich hardly ever went to church, and when he moved to Moscow, leaving his mother in Tbilisi, he hardly risked keeping icons at home. In the Tbilisi apartment, where the icons on the walls were justified by the presence of the old mother, Lavrenty Pavlovich, perhaps, furtively prayed. But how did he combine faith in God with the fact that he sent tens of thousands of innocent people to their deaths? Who knows, perhaps, Beria, destroying people for the sake of a career, consoled himself with the fact that someday he would reach the highest power in the state and then he would be able to benefit everyone, atone for past sins.

The boy was talented, and Pavle hoped that his son would break out into the people. Lavrenty very early discovered the ability to draw and interest in architecture. But he did not have the opportunity to become an architect. Back in October 1915, as Beria noted in his autobiography, written on October 27, 1923, he organized an illegal Marxist circle with a group of students from the Baku Technical School and became its treasurer.

This circle existed until the February Revolution. Things did not go further than reading Marxist literature and making presentations, and the existence of the circle of power was probably not even suspected. And already in March of the 17th, Lavrenty and several comrades organized a Bolshevik cell in the school.

Maybe, of course, about the Marxist circle, founded back in the 15th year, Beria lied. As well as about the fact that immediately after the February Revolution he founded a Bolshevik cell in the school. The latter, to be honest, is hard to believe. There were relatively few Bolsheviks at that time, and it would be unlikely that immediately after the overthrow of tsarism in the Baku Technical School there would have been a whole cell of Lenin's supporters. Most likely, it was important for Lavrenty Pavlovich to show that he had joined the Bolshevik Party even before the October Revolution.

But about the Marxist circle, Beria, I think, told the truth. The ideas of Marxism on the eve and during the First World War continued to be popular among young people, especially students. Young people united in circles to study the works of Marx, which seemed to provide answers to all the burning questions of modern life. Such Marxists by no means always identified themselves with the parties of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, and the authorities sometimes turned a blind eye to such circles. I doubt, however, that Beria ever read Capital, but he could somehow get acquainted with the basic ideas of Marxism already at the school. This ideology was supposed to please the son of a peasant from a remote Georgian village. Marxism gave simple answers to the complex questions of being and the hope of getting out of poverty.

The youth then willingly went to the revolution, was inspired by the idea of struggle for the common good. Probably Lavrenty Beria was no exception. And he, like his peers, could maintain this faith for several post-revolutionary years. Then someone became disillusioned with the revolution, went into private life or into professional activities not related to politics. Some, on the other hand, maintained a fanatical faith to the very end. Of the latter, few survived the Great Purge of 1937-1938. But there were still others who exchanged faith for cynical calculation, and to whom, undoubtedly, my hero belonged. Yes, the ideals in the name of which the revolution was made turned out to be unattainable. Yes, for its victory it was necessary to destroy thousands and thousands of not only open counter-revolutionaries, but simply people who found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, were taken hostage or under suspicion, turned out to be of an unsuitable social origin. But we are alive. Since instead of the old hierarchy, the "bourgeois-landowner", as the Bolsheviks called it, a new, revolutionary hierarchy arose, later called the "nomenklatura", everything possible must be done to enter into its composition, gain power and rations. And in order to quickly rise up the ranks, especially in such a specific institution as the Cheka, it required not only ruthlessness towards those who were declared enemies, but also a virtuoso knowledge of apparatus moves. Obviously, Beria was among such connoisseurs. And the fact that he successfully managed to get past the purge of the second half of the 30s was a rare exception for a Chekist of his level, even if he was a former one at that moment, and testified to his extraordinary abilities in terms of self-preservation.

In general, as can be judged from the few surviving

According to memoirs, Lavrenty Beria did nothing remarkable in his childhood and youth and did not stand out in any way among his peers. I believe that friends of his early years would be very surprised if they were told that a modest student of the Baku Technical School would go down in Big History as a prominent statesman. But they still argue - with a plus or minus sign, he was preserved on her tablets.

BERIA - MAN

Before turning to Beria's first steps in the political struggle that unfolded in the Transcaucasus after the overthrow of tsarism, I want to jump ahead a little and try to understand what kind of person Lavrenty Pavlovich was? The answer to this question will help us understand the twists and turns of his political fate and explain the tragic end. For many decades, the very posing of such a question to the public seemed blasphemous. Many did not perceive Lavrenty Pavlovich otherwise than a fiend. The son, Sergo, draws an almost iconic portrait of his father - a fiery knight of the revolution, a mourner for the good of Russia, Georgia and all mankind, who fell victim to the machinations of the dark forces in the person of Khrushchev, Malenkov and Molotov, Kaganovich and other members of the Presidium of the Central Committee who joined them.

Sergo Beria writes that his father was a multi-talented person: "He drew with a pencil, watercolor, oil. He loved and

understood music... My mother often bought records from the Aprelevka plant with recordings of classical music and listened to them with pleasure together with her father. But as far as I remember, my father did not read poetry. He loved historical literature, was constantly interested in the work of economists. It was closer to him.

Didn't smoke. Cognac, hated vodka. When they sat down at the table, a bottle of wine, however, stood. My father drank only good Georgian wine and only in moderate doses. I never saw him drunk...

Please note: in all the pictures, the father is depicted in extremely baggy suits. They were sewn by a tailor named Furman. I have not heard of others. Apparently, the father simply did not pay attention to such things ... It was not customary then to live in luxury with the leaders of the state. In our family, at least, there has never been a desire for luxury.

There was only one dacha, modern construction... Five small rooms, including a dining room, in one... there was a billiards table...

When we moved from Tbilisi to Moscow, my father got an apartment in a government building, it was also called the House of a Political Prisoner. People's commissars, senior military men, some members of the Central Committee lived there (this is the one that became famous after Yury Trifonov's novel "The House on the Embankment." -BS). Once Stalin looked into our apartment: "There is nothing to live in an anthill, move to the Kremlin!" Mom didn't want to. "All right," said Stalin, "as you wish. Then I'll make arrangements, let them pick up some kind of mansion."

And we changed our dacha after his arrival. Near the village of Ilyinskoye, which

along Rublevsky highway, we had a small house of three rooms. Stalin came, examined and said: "I lived better in exile." And we were moved to a dacha next to Kaganovich, Ordzhonikidze. No one had courts and pools there ...

Mother, like other wives of Politburo members, could not go to the store. There was a special service ... The commandant received an order, took money and brought everything that was necessary for this or that family. And excesses were simply not allowed ... Just one example: I didn't have second trousers ...

I remember our ski trips in the Moscow region, walks in the forest. My father was very fond of outdoor activities and knew how to relax. I remember that for two weeks, together with him, we were engaged in equipping a sports ground. And they found a small ice rink ... and bought a volleyball net ...

When we went on vacation to the south - and we always spent vacations together, later they always rested with my mother together, he liked to go to the mountains. He swam well, went kayaking or rowing ...

Together with his mother, he visited the arena - he was accustomed to riding from childhood and, it was felt, in his youth he was a good rider.

Well, there are legends about how my father loved football. They even say that in his youth, Beria was almost a professional football player. This is an exaggeration, of course, although, like volleyball, he loved football very much and probably played well.

What can I say! Your will, but somehow the image of Beria as an athlete does not fit with photographs of the obese, puffy Lavrenty Pavlovich of the last years of his life. Although I admit that in the 20s and 30s he was engaged in physical education quite actively. Also doubtful is the statement of Beria Jr. that his father "was very

gentle man. " Lavrenty Pavlovich occupied the wrong positions for most of his life, where it was possible to show gentleness.

It seems that, even having reached a high position, Beria never acquired a taste for luxury. It seems that he was really only interested in career and power. Sergo Lavrentievich testifies: "Father was unpretentious in food ... There was a cook, a very young handsome man. But, as it turned out, he had no work experience, which, however, did not embarrass the family at all. Mom herself cooked well, so our cook quickly adopted all the secrets of culinary skills and cooked quite tolerably.

Preference, of course, was given to Georgian cuisine: beans, nut sauces. If they were waiting for guests, everyone was already connected. There were never special feasts, but it was always pleasant. Scientists, artists, writers gathered, relatives from Georgia, friends visited.

As for the unpretentiousness of Lavrenty Pavlovich in food, a curious testimony of Stalin's translator Valentin Mikhailovich Berezhkov, who met with Beria at the Tehran conference, was also preserved: "He almost never touched food. Once he offered me such a pepper, and I was literally burned when I touched it with my lips.

laughed and began to insist that I swallow it. I had to pretend to listen. Then he quietly threw it under the table.

- It is very useful. Every man should eat a plate of such pepper every day, - Beria instructed instructively.

He also asked every time why I was skinny?

- Such is the constitution of my organism, - I answered. I couldn't say that the two sausages a day that we got in the canteen ... couldn't add weight to me in any way.

Beria, of course, even during the difficult war years, did not eat two skinny Nikidov sausages a day. Otherwise, it is not clear how he reached his not small dimensions. And he didn't complex about his weight. On the contrary, he sympathized with Berezhkov that he was so thin. And red peppers absorbed in large quantities, believing that they strengthen male power.

According to his son, who emphasized his father's extraordinary industriousness, Beria "never changed the habits developed in his youth. He got up no later than six in the morning. After charging, he worked with materials for at least three hours. two or three hours of work...

Unlike other members of the Politburo, who were engaged in ... pure demagoguery and eternal "personnel" questions, after all, he was always entrusted with a specific case ... "

Lavrenty Pavlovich, according to his son, "was an analyst by nature and never rushed to conclusions, based only on his own emotional perception of certain events. For a politician, this thing, he believed, was absolutely unacceptable. Without a doubt, it left its mark on his character is many years of work in intelligence ... I even judge by how he shaped me as a person, how he taught me to work systematically, work on material, compare facts, predict ...

And he was a very purposeful, persistent person. If he took on any work, he always brought it to the end. He did not shy away from rough work.

In general, at the Lubyanka and in other places, Lavrenty Pavlovich was an eternal worker! It would be hard to expect a different look from a sincerely loving son, who owes a lot to his father in the best of times with his career! But jokes are jokes, and after all, Beria really did not shirk from work, and of what, and none of his opponents really ever accused him of laziness.

In fiction, Beria, as a rule, plays the on-duty role of a villain in historical action films dedicated to the Stalin era. And only in one work does this character appear as a full-blooded and colorful hero, whose parody does not prevent him from being perceived as a relief portrait of a real historical person, albeit transformed by artistic fantasy.

Vladimir Sorokin's novel Blue Fat takes place in the Soviet Union in 1954. Here, Stalin did not die at all in 1953, but

built a powerful state based on the Russian national idea. Many of the characters here bear the names of historical figures, but they are emphatically endowed with an appearance that has almost nothing in common with the appearance of the prototype. Here is what Beria looks like at Sorokin: "Beria got up, took off his pince-nez and slowly wiped it with a suede cloth. He was a tall, thin man with a large egg-shaped, almost hairless head, narrowly sloping shoulders and long arms with expressive thin fingers; his face, narrow and elongated downwards ", always had an expression of absent-minded self-absorption, which is usually found in people of art. Small green eyes squinted blindly, full lips shone with tasteful lipstick. Beria wore an excellent dark blue tailcoat with the Order of the Red Banner in a diamond crown. A very high stand-up collar beautifully supported the narrow, thin cheekbones of the Minister of State Security.

Beria put his pince-nez on his thin little nose and spoke in a low, clear voice...

Readers will surely appreciate the humor. The slender handsome Beria, and even with pomaded lips (a hint that women are not interested in him at all), is in Blue Fat and a short fat man with a toad-like face in the surviving photographs of the late 40s - early 50s.

Beria of "Blue Fat" delivers a eulogy to the physicists Landau and Sakharov (both of them actually worked under Beria in real life): "Friends. I would like to say a few kind words about our wonderful Soviet scientists, two of whom are here. Thanks to our science ", the country of the Soviets from a backward agrarian empire has become an industrial giant. Thanks to our science, our people have a nuclear shield capable of shortening any aggressor. Finally, our scientists have come close to unraveling the phenomenon of time. Imagine what awaits all of us when the Soviet people can manage time? I myself am a cold-blooded person who does not give in to emotions. And yet, comrades, it takes my breath away when I think about it. Let's drink to the health of our scientists!"

In life, Lavrenty Pavlovich spoke with scientists not at all so sublimely. HELL. Sakharov recalls how he addressed his

Chekest colleagues, but so that the future academicians who were present at the meeting understood that this also concerns them: "Beria stood up and said something like this: " We, the Bolsheviks, when we want to do something, turn a blind eye to everything else (saying this, Beria closed his eyes, and his face became even more terrible). You, Pavlov, have lost your Bolshevik sharpness! Now we will not punish you, we hope that you will correct the mistake. But keep in mind, we have a lot of space in the turma!"

Sorokinsky Beria, unlike the present, not only is not friends with Malenkov, but sincerely hates him and intrigues against him before Stalin:

"- What a nit Malenkov is, after all," Beria began, walking near the block. "Every time I see him, I lose my temper. How can you stand him?"

- He's a good technician. He knows the production ... - he answered dully

Stalin.

But he's a monstrous schemer. How many people he ruined the blood. Kuibyshev, Postyshev and Kosior are not enough for him. Now Kosygin is crushing. Rise about ZVI...

- He has great experience.

- Kosygin knows the heavy industry as well as he does. The entire evacuation of factories rested on it. A business guy, a dandy, from a family of iron magnates. Alive, contact. He plays golf brilliantly.

- This is important for the deputy. prev. Council of Ministers?

- Yes! - Beria perked up. - I used to think like Mayakovsky: "Billiards is for me, I'm growing an eye; chess is more useful for him." Executive chess is a great thing. They teach strategic thinking. And golf - teaches tactics. In Lenin's time and in the thirties, everything was determined by strategy. Now, in the early fifties, tactical thinking is relevant. Kosygin is a promising shot."

Even the literary Beria has a touch of aristocracy, which is clearly not characteristic of the prototype. This is also emphasized by the decoration of Beria's office in the novel: "A small Lubyanka office, tastefully decorated with amber and rosewood." Which does not prevent Beria of the 54th year from ordering to torture Academician Sakharov in order to unravel the secret of the carrier of super-energy - blue fat, in order to take possession of which he plots against Stalin and destroys his associates Abakumov and Merkulov. I have no doubt that the real Beria would not hesitate to order the torture of any of the "atomic" academicians, if he considered it necessary for the cause. And if Stalin ordered to shoot the same Sakharov or Kurchatov, Lavrenty Pavlovich would have done it without flinching. Maybe just at first I would try to convince Koba that it's not worth it to cut from the shoulder so immediately, they will still come in handy. Abakumov, as we will see later, Lavrenty Pavlovich really was going to shoot, but did not have time: he himself was shot.

In general, Beria, if you try to look at his human qualities with an open mind, appears first of all as a man of action. He sets himself and his subordinates specific tasks and strives to solve them by any means, including the most barbaric ones, through repressions and threats. At the same time, Lavrenty Pavlovich is relatively indifferent to the blessings of life, although you cannot call him an ascetic, especially in terms of the fair sex. More important to him

- the work done and promotion to the heights of power through the ranks. At the same time, he is characterized by concern for relatives, friends and subordinates, whom he tried not to leave without attention and support under any circumstances. Here the ethics of love for the distant Beria, it seems, was not characteristic. Any method could be applied to strangers. But without need, Lavrenty Pavlovich preferred not to destroy a person - only when, as he believed, there was no other way out.

IN THE BOLSHEVIST UNDERGROUND IN THE CAUCASUS

In all likelihood, Beria's path to the Cheka began at the front, where he really became close to the Bolsheviks. In June 1917, Lavrentiy was sent to Odessa as a trainee technician at the army hydrotechnical school, and then to the Romanian front, where he worked in the forest detachment of the village of Negulesti. After the collapse of the front, in the autumn he returned to Baku, where in 1919 he graduated from a technical school. In his autobiography, Beria wrote: "... Since 1917, in Transcaucasia, I have been involved in the general mainstream of party-Soviet work, which throws me from place to place, from the conditions of the legal existence of the party (in 1918, in Baku) to illegal (19 and 20 years) and is interrupted by my departure to Georgia. In the detachment, according to Beria, he was the chairman of the detachment committee and often attended meetings of workers and soldiers in Odessa in this capacity. During the investigation of 1953, even Lavrenty Pavlovich was charged with entering the hydraulic engineering detachment. Prosecutor R.A. Rudenko asked menacingly: "How could it happen that you, being a member of the Party since March 1917, in June of this year voluntarily joined the hydrotechnical organization as a trainee and left for Odessa? Was this entry agreed upon by you with the Party organization?"

The essence of the accusation boiled down to the following: how could a Bolshevik voluntarily join a military organization and go to the front to participate in the "imperialist war"? Beria tried to justify himself: "What I entered this organization, Tsurinov (Tsurinov Avanesov - a fellow student at a technical school, with whom Beria created a cell of the RSDLP (b. -B. S.) knew, but I did not with anyone from the party organization (obviously, the Baku party organization is meant. - B.S.) did not coordinate this ... "

Well, a violation of Beria's party discipline can be charged, although, again, he could motivate his departure for the army with the intention to conduct anti-war agitation among the soldiers and workers of the front line. But the main motive for leaving, it seems, was the desire to complete his education. In order to graduate from a technical school, it was necessary to undergo an internship. Yes, and the earnings of a trainee technician was a significant help. True, at the same time, Beria, apparently, did not leave revolutionary activity, being elected chairman of the detachment committee.

In early 1918, after the collapse of the Romanian front, Lavrenty returned to Baku. For eight months, until the September occupation of the city by Turkish troops, he worked in the secretariat of the Baku Council of Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' Deputies. Together with the ... Turks, the leaders of the Azerbaijani Socialist Party returned to the city

"Musavat" - supporters of the national independence of Azerbaijan. Under the Musavatist government, Beria worked from October 1918 to January 1919 as a clerk at the White City Caspian Partnership factory. Then he became the chairman of the underground Bolshevik cell of Baku technicians, remaining in this post until the occupation of Baku by the Red Army in April 1920.

Beria left work at the factory to continue his studies. In his autobiography, he wrote: "In connection with the beginning of intensive studies at a technical school and the need to pass some transitional exams, I was forced to leave the service. From February 1919 to April 1920, as chairman of the team of technicians, under the guidance of senior comrades, I carried out separate assignments district committee, himself

studying with other cells as an instructor..."

Here, perhaps, a certain pragmatism is already slipping. Beria prefers to complete his education rather than devote himself to day-to-day party work. One-time assignments are far from the same as everyday activities in the underground. Yes, and a cell of technicians, it seems to me, Lavrenty led a purely formal. It is unlikely that he could really do this, for example, when, after graduating from college, he was sent by the underground Communist Party of Azerbaijan to serve in the counterintelligence of the Musavat government. Later, at the trial of 1953, this fact was regarded as a betrayal. However, an explanatory note by the old Bolshevik I.P. has been preserved in the archive. Pavlunovsky, who in 1919-1920 was the deputy head of the Special Department of the Cheka. In 1926-1928, Ivan Petrovich led the Transcaucasian GPU, and in 1932 he became Deputy People's Commissar for Heavy Industry Sergo Ordzhonikidze and, like 12 of Sergo's 13 deputies, did not survive the Great Purge. His note is dated June 25, 1937, before his arrest, and is addressed personally to Stalin. Pavlunovsky wrote that before being appointed to work in the Transcaucasus, he had a conversation with the chairman of the Cheka: "... T. Dzerzhinsky told me that one of my assistants in the Transcaucasus, comrade Beria, worked with the Musavatists in the Musavatist counterintelligence. least embarrassing and not alarming against comrade Beria, since comrade Beria worked in counterintelligence with the knowledge of responsible comrades from Transcaucasia and that he, Dzerzhinsky and comrade Sergo Ordzhonikidze know about this. In Tiflis, Ordzhonikidze confirmed to Pavlunovsky that Beria worked in the Musavat counterintelligence on behalf of the party, and this was known not only to him, Ordzhonikidze, but also to Kirov, Mikoyan and the then secretary of the Caucasian Bureau of the party A.M. Nazarethyan. Pavlunovsky concluded his note with the following words: "About two years ago, Comrade Sergo once told me in a conversation: you know that right-wing deviators and other riffraff are trying to use the fact that he worked in the Musavatist counterintelligence in the fight against Beria, but nothing will come of it. I asked Sergo if Comrade Stalin knew about it. T. Sergo Ordzhonikidze replied that Comrade Stalin knew about it and that he told Comrade Stalin about it."

Pavlunovsky also reported on Ordzhonikidze's attitude towards Beria: "During the two years of work in the Transcaucasus, Comrade Ordzhonikidze told me several times that he highly appreciates Comrade Beria as a growing

worker, that Comrade Beria would develop into a major worker, and that he, Sergo, reported such a description of Comrade Beria to Comrade Stalin.

Interestingly, this note did not affect the fate of Pavlunovsky himself. Stalin methodically destroyed people from Ordzhonikidze's entourage. At the end of June, literally a couple of days after the submission of a note about Beria, Pavlunovsky was withdrawn from the list of candidates for membership in the Central Committee at the plenum, expelled from the party, soon arrested and shot on October 30, 1937. Obviously, he did not have any motives to distort the biography of Lavrenty Pavlovich or embellish Ordzhonikidze's attitude towards him. Stalin, despite the conflict with Sergo and the latter's suicide, agreed with his characterization of Beria's business qualities. Iosif Vissarionovich always appreciated Ordzhonikidze as an experienced business executive, and he took the recommendation given by Beria very seriously. Moreover, Mikoyan also spoke well of Lavrenty Pavlovich. In any case, Stalin

considered Beria compromised. Two months after Pavlunovsky's note, Lavrenty Pavlovich was summoned to Moscow and appointed Yezhov's deputy.

Beria himself never concealed the fact of his service in the Musavat counterintelligence. In particular, in the autobiography of 1923 one can read: "In the autumn of the same 1919, from the Gummet party (a legally operating party of the Social Democratic persuasion in Azerbaijan, collaborating with the Bolsheviks. - B.S.) I enter the counterintelligence service, where I work together with Approximately in March 1920, after the assassination of Comrade Mussevi, I left my work in counterintelligence and worked for a short time in the Baku customs. From the context of this message, it becomes clear that Beria worked in counterintelligence as a secret Bolshevik agent, and was forced to hastily leave the service in counterintelligence after the exposure and death of his accomplice.

Soon Baku was occupied by the Red Army. And Lavrenty Pavlovich was immediately sent to illegal work in Georgia, where the Menshevik government was in power. Let's agree that a counterintelligence officer of the newly overthrown government would not have been sent on such a delicate mission to the country that the Bolsheviks were going to take over, unless he was in fact a "mishandled Cossack".

Beria left for Tiflis. Sh. Berishvili, a Georgian emigrant arrested after World War II, who lived in Paris, testified during the investigation in 1953: "When one day, in 1928 or 1929, my uncle Noah Ramishvili, the former Minister of the Interior under the Mensheviks, and I read in the Tbilisi newspaper "Communist" (and we subscribed to the newspaper) about the appointment of Beria to some position, then Ramishvili remembered in my presence the arrest of Beria in 1920 by the Menshevik government. Ramishvili said that Beria was arrested by the head of the special detachment Meki Kedia in 1920 year, when Beria from Baku came to Georgia on some assignment from the Bolsheviks. Ramishvili then told me that Beria, after his arrest, told him everything about his assignments and connections. I was surprised, and Ramishvili ordered me to remind him of this when he Kedia Meki will come in. The latter used to come to us often.

When Meki Kedia came to us, we asked him about the arrest of Beria in 1920 and how Beria behaved during interrogations. Kedia confirmed that Beria cried after his arrest and betrayed everyone, after which he was released.

Berishvili's testimony seems to be confirmed by the cousin of Lavrenty Pavlovich Gerasim Beria. Lavrenty stayed at his apartment in 1920, when he arrived in Tiflis. Gerasim told the investigators that he got his brother in prison under his real name, and not under a fictitious one - Lakerbaya, which is discussed below. He also confirmed that after the arrest of Lavrenty, a special detachment searched his apartment.

I wonder what Lavrenty Pavlovich himself wrote about this episode? In the autobiography of 1923, the stay in Georgia in 1920 is described as follows: "From the very first days after the April coup in Azerbaijan (as the communists called the occupation of Baku by units of the 11th Soviet army. - B.S.) by the regional committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party from

registrar (registration, i.e., intelligence department. - B.S.) of the Caucasian Front under the Revolutionary Military Council of the 11th Army, I am sent to Georgia for underground work abroad as an authorized representative. In Tiflis, I contact the regional committee in the person of Comrade. Hmayak Nazaretyan, spreading a network of residents in Georgia and Armenia, establishing contact with the headquarters of the Georgian army and guards, regularly sending couriers to the registry office in Baku. In Tiflis, I was arrested along with the Central Committee of Georgia, but according to the negotiations between G. Sturua and Noah Zhordania (the head of the Georgian government. - B.S.), they released everyone with a proposal to leave Georgia within 3 days.

Further, Beria said that he then managed to stay in Georgia and, under the fictitious surname Lakerbaya, enter the service of the RSFSR representative office, which was headed by Kirov. On May 20, Beria went to Baku for instructions in connection with the conclusion of a peace treaty between Russia and Georgia (the Bolsheviks observed it for only a few months), but on the way back he was arrested. Kirov failed to rescue Beria, and Lavrenty Pavlovich was sent to the Kutaisi prison, which was distinguished by a harsh regime. He spent over two months there. In August, as a result of a hunger strike of political prisoners, Beria and other Bolshevik prisoners were released and in August 1920 they were deported to Baku. There, Lavrenty Pavlovich was immediately appointed manager of the affairs of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. It is unlikely that he would have been entrusted with such a responsible post if there had been information about his unworthy behavior in prison.

I note that Gerasim Beria probably had in mind the first arrest of his brother, when he was actually kept in the Tiflis prison under his real name. In the Kutaisi prison, Lavrenty Pavlovich was under the name Lakerbaya and was never identified by the Georgian authorities. The assumption of the investigators in 1953 that Beria was released from prison because he betrayed the network of Soviet agents to the Georgian counterintelligence was hardly substantiated. After all, the first time he was arrested along with a large group of members of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party, but was quickly released, thanks to the efforts of G.F. Sturua, who represented the Soviet side in Georgia. The second time, Lavrenty Pavlovich was sent to the Kutaisi prison, where his brother could not visit him. Obviously, Shalva Berishvili, already

who was imprisoned, was ready to give any testimony against Beria necessary for the investigators and, voluntarily or involuntarily, combined two arrests of the future NKVD chief into one.

In addition, the question arises why the Georgian emigrants did not subsequently use the compromising material that they had against Beria? According to Berishvili, Lavrenty Pavlovich betrayed all his agents, and this fact could put an end to his Chekist and party career. However, the Georgian Mensheviks made no attempt to blackmail the powerful head of the Transcaucasian Chekists, and later the head of the Transcaucasian party organization. But they could, at least in order to alleviate the fate of their arrested comrades. But even a very biased investigation in 1953 failed to establish any facts of this kind. Isn't it more logical to assume that the former chief of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs Noah Ramishvili actually had nothing against Beria?

By the way, I would like to draw the attention of the readers to the fact that the Menshevik

Georgia was still a democratic state, and it was possible to condemn a person even to imprisonment, and even more so to death, only if there was strong evidence against him. Georgian counterintelligence probably did not have such evidence against Beria. In addition, the imaginary Lakerbaia was, after all, an employee of the Soviet diplomatic mission, and a fragile, but peace was maintained with Soviet Russia at that time. This circumstance, as well as the hunger strike of political prisoners, which caused a great public outcry, most likely explains the release of Lavrenty Pavlovich from the Kutaisi prison.

As for the participation of Lavrenty Pavlovich himself in the famous hunger strike, evidence that was not too flattering for him was preserved. In the description given to Beria in the 20s by the commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, it was noted: "In prison, he did not obey the decisions of the party organization and showed cowardice. For example: he did not take part in the time of the communists' hunger strike." But it is impossible to unconditionally believe this statement. We do not know what intrigues and struggle for power in the bowels of the Georgian GPU resulted in the above characterization, where Beria was also accused of biases towards leftism, bureaucracy and careerism, and it was recognized that it was impossible to use him in more responsible work.

Earlier, Lavrenty Pavlovich received an extremely excellent reference in Baku. This was preceded by the following events, described in the autobiography: "I remain in this position (manager of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. - B.S.) until October 1920, after which I was appointed by the Central Committee as executive secretary of the Extraordinary Commission for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the improvement of the life of workers. This work I, IT Sarkis (Chairman of the Commission) was carried out in shock order until the liquidation of the Commission (February 1921). With the end of work in the Commission, I manage to persuade the Central Committee to give me the opportunity to continue my education at the institute, where by that time I was a student (from the day it was opened in 1920. According to my requests, the Central Committee sends me to the institute, giving me a scholarship through the BakSoviet. However, less than two weeks pass before the Central Committee sends a demand to

The Caucasus Bureau sent me to work in Tiflis, by its decree appoints me to the AzCheka as deputy head of the secret operations department (April 1921) and soon - head of the secret operations department - deputy chairman of the AzCheka.

From now on, eleven whole years of the life of Lavrenty Pavlovich will be connected with the work of the Chekist. Before entering the Cheka, there was nothing particularly outstanding for Beria, as, indeed, for the vast majority of other underground communists. There is no information that the information he obtained, in particular, while serving in the Musavatist counterintelligence service, seriously helped the operations of the Red Army against Azerbaijan or the activities of the Baku Bolshevik underground.

LEADER OF THE TRANSCAUCASUS CHEKISTS

Here in the position of head of the secret operations department

The Azerbaijani Cheka, presumably, Lavrenty Pavlovich showed himself well. Although until 1922 he found the opportunity to study in fits and starts at the Polytechnic Institute. In 1923, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, Ruhulla Akhundov, issued Beria a certificate-characteristic: "The certificate was given to the responsible party worker, comrade Beria L.P., in that he has outstanding abilities, manifested in various apparatuses of the state mechanism ... Working as the manager of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, the Extraordinary Commissioner of the Registrar of the Caucasian Front under the Revolutionary Military Council of the 11th Army and the Executive Secretary of the Extraordinary Commission for the Expropriation of the Bourgeoisie and the Improvement of the Life of the Workers, he, with his inherent energy, perseverance, carried out all the tasks assigned by the party, giving brilliant results of his versatile activities, which follows to mark as the best, valuable, tireless worker, so necessary at the moment in Soviet construction ... "The author of the characterization was arrested and shot in 1938, when Beria was at the head of the Communists of Georgia. Akhundov was then the head of the Department of Arts under the Council of People's Commissars of Azerbaijan. Lavrenty Pavlovich could not or did not want to help the unfortunate person in any way.

An equally flattering description was given to Beria in 1924 by the first secretary of the Transcaucasian regional committee of the party A.F. Myasnikov: "Beria is an intellectual ... He declared himself in Baku as a capable security officer as deputy chairman of the Cheka of Azerbaijan and head of the secret operational unit. Now the head of the secret operational unit. - B.S.) of the Georgian Cheka."

Beria did a lot in the Azerbaijan Cheka. He proudly noted in his autobiography that he actively participated in the defeat of the Muslim organization "Ittihad", which, according to him, numbered "tens of thousands of members", and the liquidation of the Transcaucasian organization of right SRs. For this last operation, Lavrenty Pavlovich on February 6, 1923 was noted by a special order of the collegium of the Cheka: "For the energetic and skillful liquidation of the Transcaucasian organization of the Social Revolutionary Party, the head of the secret

the operational part of the Baku province department comrade. Beria and the head of the secret department, comrade. Yossem are awarded with a weapon - a Browning revolver with inscriptions about what to include in their service records ... "In addition, on September 12, 1922, the Council of People's Commissars of Azerbaijan noted Beria's merits with a commendation sheet.

In Georgia, where from the autumn of the 22nd Lavrenty Pavlovich headed the secret operational unit and was the deputy head of the local Cheka, he also showed himself well. In his autobiography, Beria noted: "... Taking into account the seriousness of the work and the large object, I give it all my knowledge and time, as a result, in a relatively short time, I manage to achieve serious results that affect all branches of work: such is the elimination of banditry, which has adopted there were grandiose proportions in Georgia, and the destruction of the Menshevik organization and the anti-Soviet party in general, despite the extreme secrecy. The results of the work achieved were noted by the Central Committee and the Central Executive Committee of Georgia in the form of awarding me the Order of the Red Banner ... "

So, at the age of 23, Lavrenty Beria is already a deputy head

Georgian Cheka and the head of its most important division - the secret operational unit, which was engaged in monitoring the mood of the population and developing operational measures against those who were suspected of intending to fight the Soviet regime. If you try to enter the Beria post into the system of pre-revolutionary posts, then this is the deputy (comrade) head of the provincial gendarme department. A major general or colonel was usually at the head of the department, his deputy, respectively, usually wore the rank of colonel and lieutenant colonel.

Of course, until 1917, Beria could not even dream of receiving the rank of lieutenant colonel at the age of 23. Had there not been a revolution, at this age, at best, he would have only graduated from the Baku Polytechnic Institute (if it opened) or some other university and would have entered as an ordinary engineer to one of the local oil magnates, Mantashev, Gukasov or Nobel (on at the Nobel factory in Balakhany, he had an internship in 1916). If I had been lucky, I could have received a large salary over time, but I would hardly have gone to the civil service, especially considering his craving for technical education. But this version of the biography would be feasible only if the parents or Beria himself could somehow find the means to continue his education. Otherwise, Lavrentiy would have had to go to the same Baku oil fields as a simple technician, and it is not known whether he would ever have become an engineer, whether he would have made at least some kind of career. Of course, a technician in Baku also earned quite decently. That need, as in the village, Beria would not have known. But the young Mingrel seemed to be consumed by serious ambition. And it was the revolution that made it possible to realize the most ambitious dreams.

When Beria and Stalin met, it is not known for certain. Some historians attribute this event to the time of the suppression of the Georgian uprising of the 24th year. Perhaps this has happened before. In any case, already in January 1924, Beria personally reported to Stalin that Trotsky was so weak on the day of Lenin's funeral that he could not speak in public, but only wrote an article that was read on the radio. By the way, this report refutes the version of the

Trotsky that he did not come to the funeral because of the intrigues of Stalin, who reported the wrong date for the funeral ceremony. Apparently, Lev Davidovich was really ill and physically could not attend the farewell to Lenin.

By the way, there is no evidence that Beria ever joined the "left" or "right" opposition to Stalin. Even a very biased investigation and the July plenum of 1953 did not dare to label him a "Trotskyist" or "Bukharinite" and accuse him of having links with the oppositionists of the 1920s (although the accusation against him of "bourgeois degeneration" coincided with the one Bukharin, Rykov and his comrades). Lavrenty Pavlovich was far from Trotsky, he did not show any interest in the "permanent revolution". Trotsky was the romanticist of the revolution, Beria its pragmatist. Lev Davydovich then, immediately after the death of Lenin, could win the fight against Stalin only through a military coup and the transformation of the USSR into a Latin American "banana republic" with his caudillo. They say that some commanders and commissars of the Red Army offered him to arrest the Politburo and seize power, but Trotsky rejected this idea. He wanted to be not a military dictator, but a party leader, called upon to spread the communist

revolution to the whole world, and paid for this utopia with his life.

Then, in January 24th, Beria, of course, could not assume that in sixteen and a half years he would have to lead the operation to destroy Trotsky. But, I think, even then, watching the struggle between Trotsky and Stalin, I realized that Lev Davydovich was doomed. Trotsky lost tactically, putting his own health above political expediency. He appealed to the masses of the party, that is, to those for whom he was obviously a stranger. The old guard could not forgive Trotsky for his non-Bolshevism until 1917. The young conscript, who joined the party ranks after Stalin's death, felt indebted to the party apparatus headed by Stalin, and by no means to Trotsky. And Lavrenty Pavlovich did not want to be among the losers. And he calmly repressed the Trotskyites in Transcaucasia, and then their opponents, the Bukharinites.

Another thing is interesting. When, after the death of Stalin, Beria tried to carry out his reforms, for their implementation, the role of the "Soviet Pinochet" could just suit him. But he had no chance to take power by military means, and there is no evidence that Lavrenty Pavlovich was actually going to carry out a coup by the forces of the army or the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The detective talent of Beria was especially pronounced during the suppression of the Menshevik uprising in August - September 1924. Here is what the son of Lavrenty Pavlovich Sergo tells about this from the words of his father: "In 1924, the father, the deputy head of the Georgian Cheka, learns, and in advance, that a Menshevik uprising is being prepared. Considering the scale of future performances, the father proposes to prevent bloodshed by any political measures. Ordzhonikidze (after whom Sergo Lavrentievich was named. - B. S.), in turn, transmits his information to Moscow. The situation is alarming: intelligence knows for sure that a complete plan for the uprising has been developed, detachments are being prepared, arsenals are being created. all

republic, and even if they do not really have the character of a popular uprising, but it will look like that.

Father understood that this adventure was doomed from the very beginning to failure, to great loss of life. Vigorous measures were needed to prevent bloodshed. And then he suggested taking such a step - to leak the information received. His proposal boiled down to ensuring that the Menshevik leaders themselves learned from reliable sources: the Georgian Cheka has full information about the impending uprising, and therefore it is pointless to hope for success. Ordzhonikidze, apparently, having received the consent of Moscow, did not mind: in that difficult situation, this was the only right decision. But the Mensheviks did not believe this information and regarded it only as a provocation...

One of the leaders of the Menshevik movement, the head of the national guard Dzhugeli, was sent to Georgia. His father learned about his transfer in advance from his scouts and, of course, took action: Valiko Dzhugeli was taken under surveillance from the moment he crossed the border. But just under observation - they were in no hurry to arrest one of the influential leaders of the Mensheviks. It was decided to use the very stay of Dzhugeli in Georgia for

affairs. Through his own channels, his father warned Dzhugeli that his border crossing was not a secret for the Georgian Cheka, and he was given the opportunity to see for himself that the uprising was doomed to failure.

Unfortunately, this information was also regarded as a provocation by the Chekists. Dzhugeli decided that the GruzChK was simply afraid of mass demonstrations in the republic (as it was in many respects. - B.S.) and was unable to prevent them, therefore, it was trying by any means to convince the Menshevik leadership of the opposite.

Dzhugeli was nevertheless arrested, but due to an unfortunate accident - he was recognized on the street by one of his old acquaintances, and he was officially detained. Already in prison, Dzhugeli got acquainted with the materials that the GruzChK intelligence had at its disposal, and he wrote a letter in which he urged his comrades-in-arms to refuse to speak. Neither abroad, nor in Georgia itself, they listened to him. The Mensheviks nevertheless organized the uprising, but, as expected, the army crushed it, and the people suffered senseless sacrifices that could well have been avoided. If Ordzhonikidze had intervened, bloodshed could still have been prevented, because in the very first hours all the leaders of the uprising were arrested, and the arms depots were seized. In fact, the army smashed unruly and unarmed people ... "

It would seem that it is beneficial for the son to present his father in a favorable light. So I came up with a beautiful fairy tale about Lavrenty Pavlovich, a humanist who tried with all his might to prevent unnecessary bloodshed. Moreover, there are rumors (only rumors; documents on this subject have not yet been published) that it was precisely with his cruelty in the suppression of the Georgian uprising that Beria earned the attention and favor of Stalin. But it seems more logical to assume that Dzhugeli, like former mayor of Tiflis Banya Chikashvili and former member of the Constitutional Assembly of Georgia Noy Khomeriki, were tracked down and arrested by security officers in the hope of beheading

the upcoming uprising and thereby either prevent or significantly weaken it. However, the uprising, contrary to the expectations of Beria and his staff, turned out to be quite powerful and lasted more than two weeks. At first, the rebels were successful. They managed to capture a number of cities in Western Georgia, including Chiatura, Sukhum, Batumi and Kutaisi. The fighting went on even in the suburbs of Tbilisi. But soon, additional units of the Red Army were deployed to fight the uprising, and under the onslaught of a numerically and technically superior enemy, the supporters of Georgia's independence were forced to retreat. In early September, some of them went by sea to Turkey through the Batumi port. Many wounded rebels were captured. A number of them, as well as Dzhugeli, Khomeriki and Chikashvili arrested on the eve of the uprising, were shot, others were sent to concentration camps.

On the eve of the uprising, Beria tried to change jobs. At the end of the already cited autobiography of 1923, written on the eve of the uprising, Beria asks the Central Committee to give him the opportunity to continue his education at a technical institute, since he sees his vocation in this particular branch of knowledge, has already completed a specialized technical education and will be able to give his experience and knowledge to Soviet construction in this area, and the party will be able, after completing their studies, to use it where it deems

necessary. Lavrenty Pavlovich was not ashamed to admit: "During my party and Soviet work, especially in the organs of the Cheka, I lagged far behind both in terms of general development, and also without completing my special education." By the time of his departure from Baku to Tiflis in 1922, Lavrenty Pavlovich managed to complete two courses at the Baku Technical Institute, into which the former technical school was transformed. In 1921, Beria was even going to be sent to Belgium to study the technology of oil production, but then they changed their minds and were sent to operational security work, where by the end of the 23rd he achieved considerable success. And suddenly the security officer is seized by a craving for technical knowledge. He is ready to leave the Chekist career that began so successfully. Isn't it strange? I think that one of the reasons for the newly awakened craving for technical knowledge was that Lavrenty Pavlovich in the autumn of the 23rd guessed that the Mensheviks would sooner or later raise the people to revolt, and he, as one of the leaders of the GPU, would have to drown the rebellion in blood. Beria did not want to participate in the senseless destruction of his fellow Georgians. Therefore, he tried to prevent the performance, although he understood that there were few chances for this: the Mensheviks did not have confidence in the Chekists. And at the same time he tried to return to Baku, to the institute, so as not to participate in the future massacre of the rebels. Did not work out.

If the older comrades had then satisfied the request of Lavrenty Pavlovich, his fate could have served much happier. Beria would eventually become a prominent leader of the oil industry. Here there were more chances than in the party or Chekist apparatus to survive the purge of 1937-1938, especially if by that time Beria had not managed to rise too high in the ranks. His administrative skills would have helped him make a good career during the Great Patriotic War and in the last years of Stalin's rule. During the Khrushchev thaw or

Brezhnev's stagnation, Beria would have every chance to grow up to a deputy or even first deputy head of government, and most likely would have quietly retired as a personal pensioner of allied significance, like some Baibakov. There would have been no fatal shot in the concrete bunker of the headquarters of the Moscow Military District in the 53rd, which ended his life, but in that life there would have been no leadership of the punitive department after Yezhov and the atomic project. Beria would not have become a marshal, and would not have entered the Big History, even if, according to the majority, with a minus sign.

I would venture to express a completely seditious thought. Lavrenty Pavlovich understood that Chekist work was a dirty business, and at that time the young student did not really have a soul for her (later he got involved). So he tried for the last time to jump off the Chekist train, to go to a cleaner job, to which he had an inclination even before the revolution. But it was not possible to become a petroleum engineer. Then the authorities corrupted Beria, and he could no longer leave the system. And when I tried to reform this system in 1953, it turned out that the exit fee was life.

The marriage of Beria is connected with the failed trip to Belgium. Here is what his widow Nina Teymurazovna Gegechkori said about this during the perestroika years: "I was born in a poor family. It became especially difficult for my mother after the death of my father ... I grew up in the family of a relative, Alexander Gegechkori, who took me to him to help my mother. We lived then in Kutaisi, where I studied at the elementary school for girls. For participation in revolutionary activities, Sasha often sat in

prison, and his wife Vera went to see him. I was still small, everything was interesting to me, and I always ran with Vera to prison on these dates. By the way, then the prisoners were treated well (this evidence contradicts the statement of Beria himself in his autobiography of the 23rd year that there were unbearable conditions in the Kutaisi prison. - B.S.). My future husband was in the same cell as Sasha. I did not pay attention to him, but he me, it turns out,

remembered.

After the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia, Sasha, an active participant in the revolution, was transferred to Tbilisi and elected chairman of the Tbilisi Revolutionary Committee. I moved with them. By that time I was already an adult woman, my relationship with my mother (meaning the foster mother - Sasha's wife Vera. - B.S.) did not work out for me.

I remember that I had the only pair of good shoes, but Vera did not allow me to wear them every day so that they would be worn longer. So I went to school in old rags, tried not to walk along crowded streets - I was so ashamed of my poor clothes ...

In the first days of the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia, students organized a protest demonstration against the new government. I also participated in this demonstration. The students were dispersed with water from a fire hose, and I got soaked from head to toe. Wet, I ran home, and Sasha's wife Vera asked: "What happened?" I told how it was. Vera grabbed the belt and gave me a good beating, saying: "You live in the family of Sasha Gegechkori, but do you participate in demonstrations against him?"

Once, on the way to school, Lavrenty met me. After the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia, he often went to Sasha, and I already knew him quite well. He began to pester me with a conversation and said:

"Whether you like it or not, we definitely need to meet and talk."

I agreed, and later we met in Tbilisi's Nedzaladevi Park. My sister and brother-in-law lived in that area, and I knew the park well.

We sat down on a bench. Lawrence was wearing a black coat and a student cap. He said that he had been watching me for a long time and that he really liked me. And then he said that he loves me and wants me to marry him.

I was then sixteen and a half years old. Lawrence was twenty-two years old.

He explained that the new government was sending him to Belgium to study the experience of oil refining. However, the only requirement was put forward - Lavrenty should marry.

I thought about it and agreed - rather than live in someone else's house, even with relatives, it is better to get married, create your own family. So, without telling anyone, I married Lawrence. And immediately rumors spread that Lavrenty had kidnapped me. No, there was nothing of the sort. I married him of my own accord."

For Nina Teimurazovna, this was undoubtedly a marriage of convenience. Although Nina was from a noble family, poverty had long made her forget aristocratic prejudices. In addition, after the revolution, it was unreasonable to advertise noble origin, and marriage to a young and promising Chekist helped to gain a certain position in society. Yes, and Lavrenty Pavlovich, it seems, got married not only under the influence of romantic feelings, but also because in order to travel abroad, it was urgently necessary to acquire a wife. Maybe Beria was somewhat burdened by this marriage and therefore often made fleeting connections on the side?

In Tiflis (Tbilisi), where Beria lived until 1938, a good memory of him was preserved. Here is what Nikolai Zenkovich, who visited Tbilisi today, writes: "No anger or hostility - an exceptionally benevolent attitude was preserved by his former neighbors in a large Tbilisi house, where Beria lived before moving to Moscow, holding high posts in Georgia. It is hard to believe but this is a fact: being the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, in his spare time he personally installed a horizontal bar, rings, and other sports equipment in the courtyard of the house ... This still can not be surprised - what eccentricities sometimes celebrities don't soak! But to do every morning in in a do-it-yourself sports town, exercising with the neighborhood kids - you must admit, not every current representative of power who considers himself a pure-blooded democrat is capable of this.

I note that in Moscow, due to being busy, Lavrenty Pavlovich no longer had time to exercise. Probably, that's why he got fat at the end of his life.

In Tiflis, in August 1924, Beria took another step in his career: he headed the secret operational unit of the authorized representative of the OGPU in the Transcaucasian Federation. In 1927, Lavrenty Pavlovich became chairman of the GPU of Georgia and deputy chairman of the GPU of Transcaucasia, and in 1931 he headed, along with the Georgians, all the Transcaucasian Chekists, becoming at the same time

authorized representative of the OGPU in Transcaucasia. It was definitely a general position.

By the nature of his activity, Lavrenty Pavlovich had to compile and send up secret operational reports on the mood of the population and various kinds. anti-Soviet actions. They left no illusions: the locals did not feel much love for the Bolsheviks and blamed the new government for the fact that life was becoming more and more difficult.

But Beria's work was by no means limited to papers. In Georgia and in the Transcaucasus as a whole, Lavrenty Pavlovich had to work tirelessly, suppressing uprisings and identifying and repressing those dissatisfied with the Soviet regime. One of the major uprisings broke out in March 1929 in Adjara. Khulinsky district became its center. The reason for it was the attempts to close the madrasah and oblige all local Muslim women to remove the veil. Beria was categorically against such radical measures in the campaign against religion. But the leadership of Adzharia did not listen to him, and the uprising could not be prevented. The head of the Georgian security officers had to directly supervise his suppression. It was facilitated by the fact that the rebels did not

received no support from Turkey. Even the Turkish border authorities, usually friendly to fellow Adjarians, this time observed complete neutrality. As Beria noted in a report dated March 13, 1929, Mamed Gogoberidze, head of the government of Adjara, who arrived on March 7 to admonish the rebels and captured by them hostage, "turned to the leaders of the rebels - Zebit Joidze, Abdul Takidze and Memed Efendi, said:" Before raising an uprising against Russia, you must send delegates to Turkey, to the Kedin and Kobuleti districts and enlist their support, after which, perhaps, I myself will fight side by side with you, until the border is established to the Choloka River and the independence of Adjara is declared. You should well take into account that Turkey and Russia are in an alliance, and therefore it is necessary to find out whether Turkey will agree to support you. My brother, who lives in the Kobuleti uyezd and has absolutely nothing, was classed as a kulak, heavily taxed and deprived of the right to vote. He will be the first to join you."

The Soviet official, quite possibly, exaggerated his separatism and opposition to the authorities, taking care of his own skin: the rebels could easily finish him off. But in general, his position looked too conciliatory, for which he paid after the suppression of the rebellion with his post.

The uprising in Adzharia was a spontaneous reaction to the oppression of the Muslim religion and the campaign against the kulaks that had already begun. The leaders of the rebellion did not really hope either for the help of Turkey or for speeches in neighboring counties, and if they talked about upcoming uprisings and imminent Turkish help, it was only to encourage their supporters and force them to hold out longer. The only hope was that the authorities would make concessions, and it would be possible to achieve an amnesty for the rebels. But before the suppression of the rebellion, the authorities did not make concessions.

In the same report dated March 13, 1929, Beria emphasized that "the slogans that united all sections of the peasantry were" For

veil", "Against the closure of the madrasah", "For religion". Among the demands, one should point out the demand "to change district workers", "to give timber to the peasants", "to abolish the state insurance" and so on. The center of the uprising was the Chvansky tem, whose population maintained close ties with the local beks (landowners) - the Khimiashvili (Khimshiev) brothers who fled to Turkey.

From the very first days of the rebellion, Beria arrived in Adjara. He reported to the head of the Transcaucasian GPU, Stalin's brother-in-law S.F. Redensu: "According to the decision of the meeting of the Central Committee of the CP (b) G, I left for Batum, where I arrived on March 9 at 4 o'clock. From a conversation with comrades who are here - Deputy Chairman of the AdGPU comrade Merkulov and head of the AgitProp of the regional committee comrade Asatiani, deputy secretary Comrade Panukhov's regional committee, in view of the latter's absence, the following preliminary picture of what happened and is happening in the Khuli district of Adjara is becoming clear... The absurd attempt at an armed uprising must be considered liquidated. It is extremely important now to take a deeper look at the events and try to analyze the causes of their growth...

During our stay in the affected areas, we constantly conducted an awareness campaign to avoid unnecessary

bloodshed, trying to calm the population, to return the peasants who fled to the mountains and forests back to the villages and to find out, through interrogation of the captured rebels and conversations both with their "delegations" and other comrades, the background of everything that happened, to find out what reasons forced the peasants to take up arms .

We have established with clarity that does not allow for objections that the causes of the "Khuli incident" in a number of activities of the party and Soviet bodies of Adjaristan, which turned out to be divorced from the peasant masses and failed to correctly assess both the moods of individual strata and a number of objective conditions of life and life of the Adzharian peasant.

Among these reasons, the main one is the pressure under which the campaign to remove the veil was carried out. It was found that in a number of cases, instead of creating a favorable environment for the voluntary removal of the veil, the county authorities used the method of threats, arrests and violence.

The campaign to remove the veil coincided in time: the closure of madrasas and mektebes (Muslim religious schools. - B.S.), re-elections of the Soviets and the "activation" of women in connection with the approach of March 8.

Such a "burden" turned out to be beyond the strength of the Ajarian peasant. As a result of all this, a block of kulak and anti-Soviet elements with mullahs and hodjas was able, on religious and everyday grounds, to subjugate the main masses of the peasantry - the poor and middle peasants - and thus create a united front against the measures of Soviet power ...

Communists and Komsomol members sometimes behaved defiantly. According to the testimony of the peasants, many of the party members did not greet the population at meetings, forbade calling themselves "comrades" ("What kind of friend am I to you"), laughed at religion, etc.

As a result, in the month of January, in the same Khuli district, we had a demonstration by women who, in the number of up to 200 people, beat the teacher. The repressions carried out after this incident (the arrest of 22 people),

forced the peasantry to accept and "voluntarily" take off the veil. The All-Adzharian Congress of Adzharian Women, which decided to remove the veil, outwardly passed brilliantly. However, during the period of the women's stay at the congress in Batumi, a number of tactlessness was made. Delegates were taken to operetta and ballet. The spectacle of women naked during the operetta on the stage, in the eyes of the Adjarian husbands, turned into a symbol of debauchery that reigns in Batumi and from which the Adjarian woman will be saved by the veil - honor. To remove the veil means to dishonor a woman. Some Ajarians took their wives away from the theater during the action.

It is extremely characteristic that of all the districts of Adjaristan, it is in the Khuli district that we have the largest number of cases of removing the veil (3,500), and of all those (village councils. - B.S.) Khulo, Chvansky is especially distinguished by this.

There is no doubt that these high figures were obtained as a result of administrative pressure, because otherwise this phenomenon, in view of the special lack of culture of Khulo, is inexplicable.

Therefore, when, by March 8, elections of women guests to the All-Adzhar Congress of Soviets began to be held in the Khuli district, the peasantry resolutely opposed ... By the directive of the Secretary of the Ukomat, comrade. Kalandadze in the Kontselidze family were arrested for failing to appear at the meeting 5 men (testimony of Kontselidze himself). The Temsky authorities aroused the hatred of the population.

In Skhalatinskoye, those were the cases when the Adjarians were forced to bring their sick wives to the meeting on their backs...

Errors in tax policy (re-taxation), which took place last year and have now been corrected, according to the testimony of the peasants, taught them to be critical of the measures of the authorities.

Often there were cases of tax cuts from 200 rubles to 50 rubles. The peasants declared: "If we ourselves had not taken measures to reduce it, we would have had to pay 200 rubles each." Hence the conclusion: the peasantry itself must defend its interests.

State insurance caused great dissatisfaction. Not so much in itself, but rather a system of increased collection of regular contributions and a systematic delay in issuing bonuses for dead cattle.

Therefore, in Chvany, the elections of women took place in the tense atmosphere already created by the moments indicated. The behavior of the party members who arrived on 7/LSH to hold the elections did nothing to ease the tense atmosphere. According to numerous testimonies, they declared that if the husbands did not bring the women to the meeting, repressions would be applied, that the government intended to remove the veil by force, etc. 50 peasants surrounded the comrades who had arrived and began to beat them.

The group of Abdul Takidze, an influential kulak of the village of Duz-Chvana, along with the bandits Izet Chigadidze and Odabash-oglu, took an active part in this ... Immediately after the beating, the supporters of this group dispersed to the villages of Chvanskoye, raising the population and calling on them to armed struggle for "faith and custom."

Part of the peasantry marched more or less willingly, having been promoted earlier, the other part marched because "all the neighbors came out."

The general condition of the area, although it seemed much more depressing than during the January speech of women, however

could have been resolved peacefully if a number of new circumstances had not prevented this ... Several members of the government, a number of responsible workers and some representatives of local authorities fell into the hands of the armed peasants, the mere sight of which kindled the hidden hatred of the risen peasants.

Members of the government with their comrades were surrounded in the house of Abdulla 'Takadze, who, with a group of supporters, incited the crowd against them, and on the other side promised to save the captives ... It must be frankly admitted that the behavior of the captured members of the government, in particular, the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars comrade. Mammad Gogoberidze, introduced into the minds of the rebels the idea that the government is weak, that it

press him harder, and all the demands of the peasants will be met, and that, in essence, the rebels are right in their claims. M. Gogoberidze addressed the rebels with a statement that he himself was against the removal of the veil and the closure of the madrasah, that he spoke on this issue in Batumi, but that they did not listen to him, etc. Behavior is unacceptable for a member of the government and a communist.

Beria quoted a letter from officials captured by the rebels to the Council of People's Commissars and the regional committee of Adzharia: "All the people of Chvansky Temy are very excited about the actions of the local authorities. The people of Chvansky Temy demand that both the Teme and the county governments be immediately brought to the strictest courts, and also demand that all decisions of the local authorities, in features: removal of the veil, closing of the madrasah - mektebe. And also asks no Red Army soldiers to enter, so as not to shed the blood of poor peasants in vain. We are all well protected, and everything will end in a truce. Take measures for a truce. Comrade Rykov's arrival is a prerequisite for a truce to Adjara. This is demanded not only by the Chvan teem, but by the whole of Adjara, I repeat, do not send troops, and the matter will end in peace.

Lavrenty Pavlovich concluded that the behavior of the captured members of the Adjarian government "contributed to the fact that the movement began to grow and an armed uprising resulted from an ordinary case of beating three presumptuous communists."

Already on April 6, 1929, Beria presented to Redens the report of the Georgian GPU on the events in Adjara. Stanislav Frantsevich left an eloquent resolution on the report: "This report, which explains from the point of view of the GPU of Georgia the cause of the events in Adjara, as well as the conclusions, is so exhaustive that the ZakGPU will not give a special report on this issue, fully agreeing with this report."

Before proceeding to the report itself, I will note that this resolution, in my opinion, refutes the popular opinion about allegedly conflicting relations between Beria and Redens. The only serious argument in favor of this version is the arrest of Redens on a warrant signed by Beria on November 22, 1938. The son of Stanislav Frantsevich Vladimir Alliluev claims: "To the strong, cunning and hardened intriguer Beria, eager for great power, Redens - a man of Dzerzhinsk hardening - was completely unnecessary as a boss, he was dangerous to him. And doubly dangerous, because my father, related by families with Stalin, had direct access to him.

It was not possible to dump Redens due to Beria's business qualities, and then he turns to the technique that he skillfully used all

your life - you need to compromise a person. In this, Beria was an unsurpassed professional.

My mother later told me that it was not easy for my father to work in Georgia... He was especially annoyed by frequent feasts and plentiful libations. He did not like to drink and tried his best to avoid these feasts. But one fine day, somewhere on New Year's Eve, Beria and his people gave their father a good drink, undressed him, and in this form they let him go home on foot. The "joke" worked. After this "prank" my father could no longer work in Transcaucasia as a plenipotentiary representative of the OGPU and chairman of the GPU. At the beginning of 1931 Redens

transferred to Kharkiv and appointed chairman of the GPU of Ukraine".

I don't know if Redens really drank himself to the point that he returned home in the Adam costume, and whether it was actually a "joke" organized by Beria. Somehow I can't believe that Lavrenty Pavlovich would have risked such a joke with Stalin's brother-in-law. Iosif Vissarionovich, probably, would have punished the disgraced leader of the Transcaucasian Chekists, but he would have regarded the "prank" primarily as an insult to himself. And he would have found an opportunity to get even with the architect of the scandal. According to Khrushchev, Redens heavily abused alcohol, so that he could freely drink himself to a bestial state without any help from Lavrenty Pavlovich.

Even if the incident with naked Redens on the streets of Tiflis really took place, then it did not affect the Chekist's career in any way. The Ukrainian GPU in the table of ranks was much higher than the Transcaucasian. And in 1933, Stanislav Frantsevich headed the Chekists of Moscow. There, at the height of the Yezhovshchina, a "man of Dzerzhinsk hardening" sent to death more than 10 thousand people, on whom there was no fault. But, unlike Beria, Redens was fully rehabilitated in 1961.

Vladimir Alliluyev admits, however, that "his father appreciated Beria's business and organizational skills and even believed that he could head the GPU of Transcaucasia. This is even stated in his letter to G.K. Ordzhonikidze." I think that the true nature of the relationship between Stanislav Frantsevich and Lavrenty Pavlovich is conveyed here.

It is impossible to imagine that Beria, preparing, according to Stalin's plan, to take Yezhov's chair, could have hinted to Iosif Vissarionovich that Redens should be removed. The dictator made decisions about his relatives and in-laws only himself, without consulting anyone. And it should be noted that most of the relatives of both his wives, Svanidze and Alliluyev, were either shot or ended up in the Gulag. Perhaps the leader did not want people to remain in the wild, who, in addition to his choice, but only due to relations of property, turned out to be included in his inner circle. After all, for them, Joseph Dzhugashvili was not equal to God "the great helmsman, but just a man.

Rather, it should be assumed that there were very good, if not even friendly relations between Redens and Beria, and Lavrenty Pavlovich gave the candidate for Yezhov's last diabolical test: sign a warrant for the arrest of a friend, and you will become a people's commissar. Beria passed the test. On November 20, 1938, he signed a warrant for the arrest of Redens, and on November 25 he was appointed People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR.

But let us return to Beria's report on the situation in Adzharia. Lavrenty Pavlovich emphasized: "The roots of the unfolding events lie not only and not so much in the anti-Soviet work of elements that have long been hostile to the essence of Soviet power, but mainly in the distortion of the party line during Soviet events and in a number of objective reasons."

He gave a highly qualified analysis of the socio-economic situation in Adjara: "The position of the bulk of the Adjarian peasantry is extremely unenviable in material terms. The main scourge of the Adjarian is land shortage.

the largest of the counties of Adjaristan, which was the immediate arena of performance, then here each farm accounts for an average of 0.77 hectares of sown area and 0.51 hectares of hayfield. The norm is incredibly low. From this piece of land, each household, consisting of an average of 7 souls, must feed itself during the year.

In connection with the extreme lack of land, cattle breeding and forestry occupy a great importance in the budget of the Adzharian peasant ... In the Khuli region, for example, there are more than 45,000 heads of cattle, which is an average of 11 heads for each farm ... There are enough pastures to feed livestock, each farm has 9 hectares, but most peasants prefer to drive their cattle to the Artvin region in Turkey for the summer (before the First World War, this region was part of the Russian Empire. - B.S.). Until 1926/27, the use of pastures in Adjaristan was free of charge. Then the payment was set at 40-50 kopecks per head of cattle and 12.5-15 kopecks per head of small livestock. This payment, for all its insignificance, is nevertheless quite sensitive for the budget of the peasant, since the profitability of his economy, thanks to the use of backward forms and cultures, is very insignificant.

Forestry in the pre-war period gave the peasantry more than 10,000 rubles of income per year (by the way, not so hot what amount; if we are talking only about the Khulinsky district, then it comes out only 2.5 rubles per farm, even if the royal rubles were in 5-6 times "harder" than the Soviet ones, but for the impoverished Ajarian peasants, this money was also an important help. - B.S.). As a result of predatory extermination, the forests melted with incredible speed. With the establishment of Soviet power, the issue of streamlining forestry was put on the proper plane. The entire forest area was divided into 2 parts, of which 50 percent were declared state forests with the establishment of an appropriate planned exploitation system, and the rest of the area was transferred to the jurisdiction of the peasantry. Naturally, in connection with this, the profitability of the peasantry decreased. Valuable timber from state lands began to be released for a fee, and to some categories of peasants with a certain benefit ... Still, the peasantry is very dissatisfied with this reform, and in all the demands of the rebels we find a clause on the free release of timber.

Lavrenty Pavlovich pointed to the screaming poverty of the Adjarians:
"The gross profitability of the peasant economy, according to the calculation of the Adzharian State Planning Committee, was determined in 1927-28 in the amount of 323 rubles a year. In Khulinsky district it is even less and reaches a figure of 290 rubles. economic account of the State Planning Commission,

the subsistence minimum for an average peasant family in Adjaristan is 554 rubles a year. Consequently, on average, each farm has a deficit in its budget in the amount of 264 rubles a year, i.e. 49 percent... tax), then the whole plight of the Ajarian peasantry will become more understandable.

Every natural disaster or crop failure dooms him to starvation. This was the case, for example, in 1926/27 as a result of a severe flood. This year, already in January, complaints from the poorest

parts of the peasantry to starvation. On December 8, in the village of Tskhemveni, the poor Khurshud Eminovich Makharadze, 47 years old, in a group of peasants 4-5 people, spoke out: "I ran out of money and corn, what will happen to us in the winter, we will all die of hunger if this continues, then Adzharia will rise up against the communists"...

Naturally, in connection with this need, dissatisfaction with the authorities arises, which is intensively exaggerated by the kulak elements.

Beria also noted that the flourishing of criminal trades in Adjara was caused by a hopeless economic situation: "The plight of the Adjarian peasantry is one of the reasons for the high prevalence of smuggling in Adjara. Having deep economic roots, smuggling is not destroyed here, despite the use of repressive measures."

The introduction of compulsory state livestock insurance also caused great dissatisfaction. Aid to the population affected by the flood was plundered, which also did not contribute to the popularity of the communist government. Beria cited deadly facts: "To assist the population affected by the flood, 194,000 rubles were allocated in 1926/27. Of this amount, only 50,000 rubles were spent for its intended purpose, the rest went to other expenses that have nothing in common assisting flood victims..."

Beria laid the blame for the outbreak of the uprising on the local party leadership of the Khulinsky district: "All available materials show that the behavior of a fairly significant part of the party and Komsomol members during the most important campaign for the re-election of the Soviets and the fight against religious and domestic inertia ... served as one of the reasons for the emergence speeches... Short-term arrests, threats and violence often accompanied the campaign to remove the veil and close the madrasah.

All this naturally causes open and obvious dissatisfaction among the broad peasant masses, which is even more aggravated by the fact that the party members and Komsomol members themselves did not do what they were doing.

In the village of Semeba on January 15, 29, a general meeting was scheduled to conduct a preparatory election campaign. The meeting was assembled by a resident of the village of Sameba, candidate of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Koboladze Khasan Mamudovich, who that day arranged the wedding of his sister with gifts and, in order not to fail the wedding, persuaded the peasants to come to the wedding instead of the meeting. Up to 200 people were invited. Among the peasants, there were conversations on this basis: our government

forbids us to arrange weddings, but the communists themselves do it to earn money, arrange a wedding with gifts, and Koboladze did not even think about disrupting the meeting of the peasants.

In the village of Tkhilvani of Skhaltinsky Tem (village council. - B.S.), the cell of the Komsomol, whose secretary is Isa Mikeladze, is 100 percent religious. All members of the cell go to pray before the meeting... Mikeladze, together with the Red Army soldier Pataradze, was fishing. When it was time to pray, he dropped everything, knelt down and began

pray.

During the campaign to remove the veil, the Communists, Komsomol members and their families not only did not give a proper example to the masses, but, on the contrary, very often contributed to the disruption of the campaign and the growth of dissatisfaction with the fact that, without removing the veil of their wives, they forced others to do it ...

The weakness of the party and Komsomol organization, the lack of political intuition among the leading elite, their separation from the rest of the mass of the peasantry and the sharp disdain for them were the most important reasons for the hatred that the peasants began to harbor towards the Communist Party in general.

"Communists are like wolves for us," the rebels said in their speeches...

Part of the party members, in order to avoid beatings and save their lives, joined the rebels, even led their small detachments, the other, who remained more or less loyal to the party, was persecuted and arrested among the rebels.

The head of the Georgian GPU specifically noted that "as early as the end of 1927, we signaled the growth of a mass movement in Adjara, which then manifested itself in a strong resettlement mood, threatening to turn into an armed uprising." This meant the intention of many Adjarians to move to Turkey.

Beria especially dwelled on the role of the Muslim clergy in organizing the uprising: "The rural population of Adjara is served by 150 mosques and two hundred mullahs. Thus, for every 300 Adjarian peasants there is one mullah, for every 400 - one mosque. The financial situation of the mullah is higher than the average peasant economy. In most cases, the Adjarian mullahs can be ranked among the kulaks due to their economic status... Only a smaller half of the mullahs are engaged in exclusively spiritual activities. a mullah earns 400-500 rubles from a mosque... This income already significantly exceeds the average profitability of the Adjarian peasant economy... Peasants provide so-called "labor assistance" to mullahs... Spiritual careers often attract young peasants, and now we have a number of groups with a total number of up to 100 people who take a special course in a special kind of seminaries and are preparing to become mullahs ... The Adjarian mullah takes a sharp anti-Soviet position not only on religious grounds, but also because his economy is a kulak economy.

The Adjarian clergy retained their rights almost completely intact even after Sovietization. The former chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Khimshiashvili, organized the clergy, uniting them in the person of the muftiate, and provided this clergy with benefits and privileges that they never enjoyed in Adjara.

Beria also pointed out the connection of the rebels with the Adjarian emigration: "Khimshi district is a sphere of influence of the beks from the Khimshiev family. The Sovietization of Adjara forced the Khimshievs to flee to

Turkey and settle in the border zone (Ardagan, Potskhov).

In Turkey, the Khimshievs felt like guests and continued to consider themselves masters of Upper Adjara.

The Adjarian peasants did not break ties with the beks, communicating with them during summer wanderings. This allowed the beks to influence the Adjarian peasants in a negative direction. The beks exaggerated all the failures of the Soviet power, instilling dissatisfaction with the Soviet power in the consciousness of the Adzharians and foreshadowing its near end. Constant communication with political emigrants of Georgia, Azerbaijan and so on. allowed the beks to inquire about the anti-Soviet plans of the Caucasian emigration, which in turn was passed on to the Adjarian peasant. It is well established that until 1927 the Adjarians of the Khuli district regularly paid taxes to their emigrant beks.

Beria tried to resolve the conflict with the rebels without the use of force:

"The period of peaceful negotiations with the rebels continued until the morning of March 24, and our stubborn desire to end the conflict without the use of repression, unfortunately, did not give the desired results." The rebels' demands included "freedom of religion", "free re-election of the Soviets"; "opening of a madrasah"; "the abolition of the ban on wearing a veil"; "expulsion of all Georgians and communists"; "change of the county authorities and removal of some people's commissars of the Adjarian government"; "amnesty to all participants in the uprising and those arrested"; "cancellation of payment for timber and state insurance"; "prohibiting the education of girls".

Lavrenty Pavlovich reported on how he managed to suppress the uprising: "At the first appearance of military units, the participants in the performance, with a few exceptions, went home almost without any resistance, and the matter cost the most insignificant victims. The rebels did not accept the battle and at the first shots they scattered in different directions "Some of them (about 200 people) led by the leader Ali Sultan Bolkvadze went to Turkey. The very next day, 25. Sh, the entire movement was liquidated. The total number of our dead was 8, the rebels had about 30 people, the wounded - 10 with us and about 30 with the rebels." Iskander Makharadze, one of the leaders of the rebellion in Skhalt, was shot.

The casualty figures look plausible, since the troops, unlike the rebels, had machine guns at their disposal and did not lack ammunition.

To improve the situation, Lavrenty Pavlovich proposed to send to the Khulinsky district "an authoritative commission to examine the work of the party and Soviet apparatus and consider the complaints of the peasants", to remove a number of workers who had made a mistake and "to especially examine the issue of providing the peasants with forests, state insurance and credit." At the same time, Beria wanted to conduct an inspection in other districts of Adjara and in

all Muslim regions of Georgia to prevent similar unrest. Beria emphasized: "In the absence of measures along the party and Soviet lines, all the activities of the GPU will not achieve their goals, and the reasons that underlie the armed uprising that took place will not be eradicated." He understood that it is easier to prevent uprisings by economic and political measures than to use the troops later. Without need Lavrenty Pavlovich people never

ruined. But he did not suffer from softness either. A few weeks later, the main leaders of Adzharia were replaced (none of them survived 1937), and a number of rebel leaders who laid down their arms were arrested and shot. But the uprising forced the authorities to make concessions - to re-allow the wearing of the veil, open a madrasah and not force women and girls to attend schools.

The change of leadership in Adjara has also caused unrest. The former chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Gogoberidze was from the Kobuleti district of the autonomous republic, and the new one, Lordkipanidze, was a "Varangian" from Georgia. Compatriots of Gogoberidze were indignant: "If there is no our chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, then we will do worse than the Khuli people." But this time it worked out. And Beria shot Zekeriya Lordkipanidze in 1938.

The uprising in the Khuli district caused a resonance in Batumi and other cities of Adjara. Beria noted with concern that in the conversations of the Adjarians "repeated ... demands for freedom of the veil and spiritual teaching, the closure of Georgian schools, joining Moscow, etc. Along with this "Moscow orientation", interethnic relations between Georgians and Adjarians sharply escalated. Among the workers, this was accompanied by a number of defiant actions on the part of the Adjarians (absenteeism from work, beatings). In turn, the Georgians spoke in the sharpest and most contemptuous way about the "ungrateful pigs - Adjarians", which General Lyakhov had not exterminated in his time in vain, and etc. The Russian workers were indignant at the rumors that "Adzharians were cutting off the heads of the murdered Russian Red Army soldiers", despite this, they, more objectively assessing the events, pointed to the mistakes of the local authorities in the anti-religious policy, to the fact that the peasants were involved provocateurs, counter-revolutionaries, etc." Beria stated that after the suppression of the uprising, "the alarming state did not subside. Many Adjarian farms intend to leave for Turkey, Komsomol and party members fear terrorist attacks, the Greeks show a tendency to leave for their homeland. The labor productivity of Adjarian workers at Batum enterprises has fallen significantly."

As the necessary priority measures to improve the situation in Abkhazia, Beria recommended: "To propose to the Adjara regional committee to send an authoritative commission to the Khulinsky district to examine the work of the party and Soviet apparatus and consider the complaints of the peasants, which should work in all those.

To examine especially the question of providing the peasants with timber, state insurance, and credit.

To improve the health of the district and Temsky party and Soviet apparatus by removing a number of workers.

Use the experience of checking in the Khuli district to carry out appropriate organizational measures not only in the other districts of Adjara, but also in all Muslim regions of Georgia.

Take appropriate measures to raise the level of development of the Adjarian peasantry."

With acute conflicts between Georgians and Armenians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Abkhazians and Georgians, between various

Beria was well acquainted with ethnographic groups within the Transcaucasian peoples, as he headed the Secret Operational Directorate of the Transcaucasian GPU.

In the last years of his life and after his death, Lavrenty Pavlovich was often accused of "Mingrelian nationalism." But in reality, when he was in Georgia, he fought tirelessly against this nationalism, as well as with all the others, in full accordance with the line of the party. So, on April 23, 1929, in a regular information report, Beria reported: "The project of transferring the center of a number of districts of Western Georgia to Poti caused discontent in a number of districts of the Zugdidi district ... A lot of talk was created around the Zugdidi Museum. Tiflis to appropriate the museum, for which they want to deprive Zugdidi of its significance as a district center. These rumors are supported by information that has penetrated into the masses about the alleged sale of part of the exhibits for export abroad. "predatory attitude towards cultural values", etc.

It is easy to see behind all this, on the one hand, a reflection of local interests, infringed upon by the liquidation (in the opinion of the peasants) of the museum, which brought income to residents from sightseers; on the other hand, the history of the museum is a pretext for any hostile agitation, including the agitation of the so-called "Mingrelian separatists." also the economic basis.

One romantic story is also connected with the fight against "Mingrelian separatism", in which Lavrenty Pavlovich showed himself to be a tireless fighter for morality. On October 27, 1930, he reported to the leadership of the Transcaucasian Federation: "The chairman of the Pakhulan collective farm (Tsalenjikha district) Leonty Gogokhia was arrested about two months ago on charges of completely proven kidnapping of the Komsomol member Kozua in order to force her to marry him. In addition, Gogokhia has a number of costs behind him, and only through the Tsekavshiri line he spent 13,000-14,000 rubles.

After the arrest of Gogokhia, a number of facts occurred, indicating that he enjoys completely undeserved support from some responsible comrades, which has already led to the release of Gogokhia on bail, and in the future can save him from responsibility for everything he has done.

When an employee of the Zugdidi branch of the Georgian GPU found the kidnapped Komsomol member Kozua, together with the kidnapper Gogokhia, delivered it to the department, the secretary of the ukom comrade Zhvania arrived there and in the presence of the head of the department comrade Zakaria began to persuade Kozua:

"What's special happened, Gogokhia loves you, and you would marry him..."

T. Zhvania told the Komsomol member that "responsibility for the death of the Pakhulan collective farm, which will inevitably fall apart," will fall on her.

Kozua objected: "Not only do I not love Gogokhia, but I don't even respect

his. I knew him only as the chairman of the collective farm and, as the only member of the Komsomol, did all the social work that lay down on me.

In parallel with this, Kozua said that Gogokhia molested her with declarations of love, with letters, etc. She complained to the Ukom and Narobraz (obviously, Kozua worked as a teacher. - B.S.), but no one protected her from harassment Gogokhia.

Soon, various easing of the prison regime for Gogokhia began. He was visited by various, often unreliable persons. Through them, he campaigned for "the peasantry to collectively demand his release."

Gogokhiya sent a telegram to the Tselendzhikha RC of the KKE threatening that "collectivization is in danger of collapsing if he is not released."

The collective farm board, under the influence of Gogokhia, demanded that Gogokhia be summoned "to clarify some questions." Indeed, Gogokhia was escorted to Pakhulani under escort. He took advantage of the opportunity to campaign in favor of an "autonomous Mingrelia", since Gogokhia belonged to the group of "autonomists". The calculations of this group include the transfer of the district center from Tsalenjikha to Zugdidi, since this should weaken the rest of the districts of the former Zugdidi district at the expense of one, the main Zugdidi district.

Finally, recently Gogokhia has been completely released on bail, and his hands are completely untied, both for settling personal scores with his enemies, and for "autonomist" activities. Measures must be taken to ensure that extraneous impressions are not mixed up in the Gogokhia case and that impartiality is ensured to the investigation."

Here, the embezzler and kidnapper of a Komsomol girl (just like in the "Prisoner of the Caucasus" - "a student, a Komsomol member, a beauty") also appears as a malicious "Mingrelian autonomist", and Beria himself is a fighter for a girl's honor. True, the loving nature of Lavrenty Pavlovich himself was already then a byword. Later, in 1953, during the investigation, he was reminded of this. Then Beria admitted that he really had a lot of women, but that they entered into intimate relations with him only by good agreement or, in the case of professional priestesses of love, for money at the established rate. Dozens of women who appeared on the lists of Beria's secretaries, on the contrary, claimed that they had entered into relations with Lavrenty Pavlovich under duress, under the threat of reprisals, or were even raped by him. Well, it was risky to confess one's disinterested love for the defeated chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs - they could immediately be taken into circulation as an "English spy" and "conspirator". So we will never know the whole truth about the love affairs of our hero.

The talented publicist Kirill Stolyarov argued that "Lavrenty Pavlovich showed an idyllic, bookish idea of \u200b\u200bcollective farmers ... He

I didn't really know, and, apparently, I didn't want to know. "But Beria knew the village of the 20-30s very well and had no reason to believe that after the devastating war of 1941-1945, life there became better. He

carefully supplied the leadership of Georgia and Transcaucasia with secret reports on the mood of the people.

The peasants saw hopes for getting rid of the hardships of the grain crisis of 1928-1929 and complete collectivization in the leaders of the anti-Stalinist opposition. So, on April 2-7, 1930, the Chekists seized in Tiflis up to 300 copies of Trotskyist leaflets, which, in particular, stated: "The apparatus bureaucracy has seized power. The worker is no longer the master of his country ... Even if the five-year plan is fulfilled, this will only strengthen the system of the bureaucracy. The workers will be left with nothing. There is no need to succumb to deception ... Now various sections of the bureaucracy, the Stalinists, the Rights, are fighting each other. All of them, not to mention the Menshevik and other bastards, want to take advantage of the discontent among the working masses ... Conscious workers, learn more deeply Lenin's unfulfilled testament in order to understand all the tricks and maneuvers of government apparatchiks ... Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat, not in words, but in deeds!

And in Batum, on the night of May 5-6, handwritten leaflets were distributed already on behalf of the right: "Working people. The Communist Party is on the eve of death. We assure you that the Communists will soon be destroyed. Unfortunate people, your groan is heard everywhere. You have neither bread nor joy." The leaflet was signed: "Right Worker".

Characteristically, the oppositionists equally vilified both the "Stalinist apparatchiks" and other anti-Stalinist currents: the Rights, the Mensheviks, and "other bastards." In the face of mortal danger, the opposition discovered a fatal inability to unite. All sorts of "blocs" of Trotskyists and Rightists, Rightists and Mensheviks, Dashnaks and Musavatists arose only in the heads of the KGB, but by no means because Lavrenty Pavlovich's colleagues believed in the reality of such alliances. It's just that in this way it was possible to cover much more "enemies of the people" within the framework of one "conspiratorial organization."

On May 5, 1930, Beria reported to the leadership of Transcaucasia about the mood of the population of the Erivan and Leninakan districts in connection with food difficulties: "In the village of Geygumbet, local Trotskyists are provoking that" the Red Army is no longer able to resist the gangs, and in Nakhkrai (Nakhichevan? - B.S.) she surrendered to the bandits... Trotsky gathered 6000 askers from Turkey and went over to the side of the Dashnaks, and soon the Dashnaks led by Trotsky will be in Armenia. The inspirer of the latest provocation (about Trotsky) was Akuppyryan, the former leader of the Trotskyist group.

Lev Davydovich Trotsky, at the head of 6 thousand Turkish soldiers, as the leader of the Dashnaks, going to liberate Armenia from the Bolsheviks - this can only be imagined in some joke from the Armenian radio. But Stalin got so tired of the peasants that they are ready to believe in the reconciliation of the two worst enemies - the Turks and the Dashnaks and the willingness of the latter to submit to the man who led the liquidation of independent Armenia.

From hunger and hopelessness, and not such crazy combinations will come to mind. And the hunger was such that instead of meat in borscht she could

turn out to be... a lizard. Beria reported to the leadership of the Transcaucasus: "On June 1, 1930, in the Zabratskaya canteen of the TsRK No. 13 (t. Baku. - B. S.) they cooked

along with borscht, a rather large lizard. Parts of this lizard ended up on several plates of dining workers (it turned out to be an involuntary synthesis of Ukrainian cuisine with Far Eastern cuisine, which Baku workers, accustomed to Caucasian cuisine, clearly did not appreciate. - B.S.) ... Recently, in the new workers' canteens of the FZR plant at construction sites "Max-Miller", "Bedsher", "Winkler", "Koch", where up to 1000 people work, there is a distribution of meals of obviously poor quality, for example, worms of 2 centimeters were found in the borscht of several workers, main dishes are some sometimes emetic and often rejected by workers. 28. [H. 1930 and 4/X drew up acts with the signatures of the factory committee and several workers about the worms found and the putrid smell in the 2nd dish.

And when an uprising broke out in Azerbaijan in the summer and autumn of 1930 in connection with collectivization, the rebels pinned their hopes on the leaders of the right opposition to Stalin. A member of the Communist Party, a railway worker from Baku, Rakhmanov, who was captured by the rebels, testified in his report to the leadership of the Transcaucasian GPU - Redens and Beria: "The area where I was sent is literally teeming with bandits. There are gangs of up to 200 people. that they are well stocked with cartridges. I met in July with a group of bandits on horseback. They entered into a conversation with me. They do not call themselves bandits, but simply people who are saving their lives from the arbitrariness of local authorities, who have reduced them to the need to take up arms "The peasants complain about their hard life and hopeless situation. On the one hand, they are obliged to supply the government with bread, and on the other hand, they supply the bandits who demand bread." In general, the Reds will come - they are robbing, the whites (more precisely, the greens - after all, the uprising was going on under the green banner of Islam) will come - they are robbing again ...

Redens and Beria quoted the judgment of the non-party Baku locksmith I. Afanasyev about the uprising: "An uprising has already begun in Ganja. Troops have been sent there to pacify. The rebels in Ganja are blowing up bridges and robbing trains. no matter how much a thief steals, sooner or later he will break his head. Look at the mood of the masses. There is not a single percent satisfied. The government directly mocks the people. After all, it cannot even supply the population with bread. It will harm the government itself, and then find some pests. I had to talk to many, and they directly say - let the war begin, we know who to raise a rifle for robbing our fathers. After all, the party members themselves are against this disgrace. Look at the mood of our workers, and you yourself will understand well. Cossacks in the North Caucasus, they are just waiting for the beginning of the end." To this cry of the soul, the Chekists made the following note: "In the past, Afanasiev was the owner - he had his own workshop, at the present time he is anti-Soviet."

And Ivashenko, a worker at the Baku Soyuzneft, was dreaming with some obscure sexot: "The workers eat nothing but bread. Our situation will improve when Rykov is driven out, and after him

Stalin." The leaders of the right, it turns out, were just as hated by the workers as Stalin.

However, some of the dissatisfied, especially from among the intelligentsia, expressed sympathy for Bukharin. "With this kind of policy,

if we continue in the same spirit, we will not go far, - said Zimnikov, a non-party engineer of the rationalization department of the Shmidt Baku plant, - the main thing is that everyone is silent and does not want to say anything. The policy pursued by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks will lead to the fact that soon people will die of hunger (as an engineer looked into the water. - B.S.). Bukharin was right that it was impossible to turn heavy industry around so abruptly. All this can negatively affect the population and cause undesirable fluctuations, and the party members will someday wake up from hibernation. The workers are secretly grumbling about the five-year plan. As long as it's possible, we need to fix it now."

Another Baku engineer, Barak, responding to the execution of 48 "pests", said: "The Soviet government found the cause of the difficulties in those 48 who were shot. almost impossible. The cooperatives are empty, the lunches are disgusting in the canteens, what will happen next, no one knows."

The workers in Transcaucasia were in a non-holiday mood on November 7, 1930. In a summary compiled in connection with the main revolutionary holiday, Beria reported on the statements of the workers of the Armenian Carbit Factory: "Everything that was reported at the meeting (about the achievements of power, etc.) is a lie." "We are not obliged to work for the benefit of the peasants, since the latter do nothing themselves, and the workers are forced to work for them. The peasants do not give us anything from their products for this. By doing this, we will only turn them into loafers. donkeys of self-sacrifice. On the only day off (November 7), we, the workers, are driven anywhere. Naked and barefoot, they send us to the cotton harvest, without supplying us with shoes and clothes." Director of the Clinical Institute Melikyan summed up such sentiments: "We are not up to the October festivities when the stomach is empty."

The October demonstration in Baku that year also did not go smoothly. Beria reported: "In the demonstration, individual workers opposed right-wing deviators and called for a fight against them. Some of the speakers supported right-wing opportunist slogans, denying the need to fight Bukharin, Rykov and others. The Tiles blamed Bukharin for his wrong approach to questions of economic construction, but in fact it turned out that he was right. We are being starved, our salaries are not paid on time." Simonyan, a Komsomol member, a worker in the construction department of the Leninsky district: "Nothing came of the idea of collective farms, they ruined the peasants and they will starve us to death. There was no need to insist and listen to the starving workers and peasants. We workers work hungry and naked, while the commissars' wives walk around in silk and gold. They sit on the neck of the worker, and the further, the worse it gets, the end is not in sight. "Azneft worker Kurdikov:" The peasants are robbed, they are not allowed to develop their economy, the people are starving. If several more go over to the side of Rykov and others

leaders, then Stalin will be defeated." Unknown: "It seems that the situation is improving. The Politburo is actually now pursuing a line of right deviation. Goods are released without warrants, and fence books (cards. - B.S.) will soon be cancelled. Reduced the release of goods abroad. Why blame the deviators, because they didn't want it."

"Stalin's policy has led us to poverty. No wonder Rykov and Bukharin are against his policy. Hunger can be tolerated for a year, and not for several years in a row. After all, you won't be fed up with factories and factories," Gritsenko, a member of the CPSU (b) was indignant at the Pyatakov plant boiler. And another member of the party, the stoker of the same plant, Heydar Kerimov, said in a group of workers: "Because of Stalin's policy, all Persian subjects are leaving for Persia. They are right, because no one wants to starve."

On November 6, 7 and 8, 1930, on the territory of the factory district of Baku, security officers found 35 leaflets and proclamations of anti-Soviet, anti-communist and anti-Stalinist content. Among them were, for example: "Comrades. Only Rykov will let us live, but not Stalin - a nationalist. Long live free life."

"Citizens, comrades. They are tearing three skins off you. Down with the communists - parasites. The headquarters of the defense of the city of Baku."

"Government of the USSR, we want to live."

"Comrade workers. You have the strength. Enough suffering for you. Your children are dying, just like you. Overthrow this lousy government and you will live like people."

Beria stated with regret: "There were no festive moments in the mood of the masses."

The conflict in the leadership of Azerneft also caused a lot of trouble for the GPU. The grouping of the Agalarov brothers openly sympathized with the Trotskyists. As noted in the summary of the Transcaucasian GPU, "The Agalarovs declare: 'Why was such a leader like Trotsky expelled from the party. Now a handful of bandits are leading the party. '" Beria concluded: "The time has come to remove them (brothers) from the factory."

Food difficulties in 1930 forced numerous Persian citizens who worked in Baku factories and oil fields to return to their homeland. As noted in the summary of the Transcaucasian GPU, "a number of workers of the non-citizens, reflecting in this case the mood of the majority, assert: 'Earlier, life was better under Nicholas and under the Mussavatists. The Soviet power is to blame for the shortages. There will be no improvement, in the future it will be even worse '".

The non-party Mehdi Kuliyeu, a non-party operator of the Cracking plant, spoke about the same thing: "You can never build socialism with our leaders. We have been existing for 12 years, we are waiting only for good things, but it is getting worse and worse."

But most of all in 1930 Beria's troubles were caused by the uprising in Azerbaijan. In early December, the Transcaucasian GPU reported on the fight against the rebels in the Ganja district, whose number exceeded a thousand people: "The bandit movement was headed by a former member of the Musavatist parliament, a former mullah ittihadist (a member of the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan, which Beria successfully fought in the early 20s - B.S.) Gadzhi Akhund The unification of bandit groups under his leadership set the task of organizing a mass

speeches. To this end, Gadzhi Akhund deployed a / s

agitation. Rumors "about the imminent fall of the Soviet power, the arrival of the British, Turkish troops," etc., were intensively spread. e. The peasants were called to fight against the collective farms, to an armed uprising "against the Russian invaders, for religion, for liberation from poverty," etc. Proclamations with similar slogans were distributed in the Gadabay region. To confirm the rumors about the arrival of Turkish troops, one of the bandits (by order of Haji Akhund) was dressed as a Turkish officer and sent to the villages, accompanied by a bandit group that publicly called him "pasha". At the same time, the bandagitors assured the peasants that "the Right deviators were in solidarity with Haji Akhund," and so on.

This training gathered over 1,000 well-armed people around Haji Akhund and brought a number of villages in the Shamkhor and Kasum-Izmailovsky districts under his influence. The wealthy kulak stratum in these areas was the closest source of material and physical assistance to the bandit movement.

Military units were pulled into the area of concentration of gangs. Active performances of bandit groups began on November 10.

Yes, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy in front, on dashing horses, at the head of the warriors of Islam - this is about the same as Trotsky, uniting Dashnaks and Turkish soldiers under his command. But the peoples of the former Russian Empire kept hoping that someone would come to save them from Stalin and the Bolsheviks, be it Trotsky, Bukharin, the British, the Turks, hell, the devil ... Although Turkey at that time was generally an ally of Moscow, and the Turkish authorities severely limited the anti-Soviet activities of the Caucasian emigration in the border areas. England did not have any plans to intervene in the USSR.

The rebellion of Haji Akhund at first seemed like a serious threat. The rebels even managed to interrupt traffic on the Baku-Tiflis railway for a day and a half.

However, it soon became clear that there was no way to get hold of food in a country where the peasants barely make ends meet from harvest to harvest. The people of Haji Akhund were forced to requisition food from the population, thereby restoring it against them. As noted in Beria's report, already in early December, "Haji Akhund began to persuade his comrades to break up into parts, motivating them with the offensive of the Red Army, the inability to get food in large quantities." Very soon, Haji Akhund had to split his army into small detachments, and most of the rebels went home. The troops under the command of the head of the Azerbaijan GPU M.P. Frinovsky was driven by a group of Haji Akhund and 9 of his closest supporters to the Divarda winter quarters, where almost all of them, including the leader, were killed in battle on December 9, 1930. The uprising raised by Haji Akhund was suppressed with the help of severe repressions. Hostages were taken in the villages, forcing the peasants to hand over the hiding rebels. Participants in the rebellion who were captured and suspected of aiding them were shot on the spot. Only on December 8, 1930, for example, 23 "bandits" and 10 "accomplices and harborers" were executed. By social affiliation, the executed were distributed as follows: kulaks - 12, middle peasants - 15, poor peasants - 2, workers - 2, anti-Soviet element - 1

co-worker - 1. Some who voluntarily laid down their arms

the rebels were temporarily left at large in the hope that they would persuade their comrades to stop the fight. Then they were quietly "withdrawn" and either shot or sent to concentration camps.

Stalin also read all the reports of the GPU. And he was afraid that if the crisis deepened even more, the former leaders of the opposition could become the banner of popular discontent, and their local supporters, as well as the surviving Mensheviks, Dashnaks, Socialist-Revolutionaries and members of other banned parties, would give organization to the actions of the workers. Therefore, immediately, as soon as a suitable pretext appeared - the murder of Kirov, a wide campaign of preventive repressions of all suspects began, which culminated in 1937-38.

Beria noted with concern that during the demonstration on November 7, 1930 in the capital of Azerbaijan, although "individual workers opposed the right deviators and called for a fight against them ... some of the speakers supported right-wing opportunist slogans, denying the need to fight Bukharin, Rykov and others. ".

Food difficulties made people nostalgic for the time when anti-Soviet governments were in power in Transcaucasia, not to mention the blessed tsarist time. So, as early as April 30, 1929, in connection with the introduction of bread cards - 800 grams for workers and 400 grams for dependents per day, Beria recorded in the summary the unflattering statements of workers about Soviet power. "You don't need to believe the nonsense of our government. Everything it promised was a lie. Wasn't life better under the Mensheviks. The Mensheviks were right when they fought the Bolsheviks. Tiflis loader Luka Bogviradze.

And in Armenia, the peasants longingly recalled the deported kulaks and other "exploiters". The reports of the GPU recorded how in April 1930 in Armenia "in the village of Avdibek, Alamli region, the laborer Sedrak made the following statement at the meeting of the poor: "What the Soviet government gave me, I was fed by the priest, and I must help him" ". And in the village of Amamly, farm laborer Palizyan said very seditious things: "Our kulaks are the same farm laborers as Iya. I personally worked for the kulaks of the Baghramyans, and they worked more than me. In our village, whoever is poor is a loafer. These are the people who suffer day and night, work."

Since such sentiments are manifested even among "class relatives", it means that things are bad. The dispossession and division of the wealth of those deported among the rest of the peasants became absolutely necessary for the survival of Soviet power. Now the peasants were bound by mutual responsibility, separated forever from those who worked day and night and were not afraid to defend their own and public interests before the authorities. And the uncontrollable peasant herd could already be driven into the collective farm, when by promises, and more often by brute force.

Discontent also persisted on the collective farms, but there it was much easier to control it by the same GPU, together with the collective farm leadership. The mood of hopelessness grew among the peasants. Beria reported: "In the village of Karabulage, Abiran region, the middle peasant Arutyunyan, while explaining Comrade Stalin's article "Answer to comrade collective farmers", declared the following among the peasants:

"They make speeches for their own pocket, they say that the government is workers' and peasants', don't believe it. They lie, the communists use the name of a peasant to keep us silent. There is no truth anywhere and never will be."

Lavrenty Pavlovich also quoted a sample of the propaganda distributed among the peasants by the Trotskyists: "The party is decomposing, the government has lost its head and is now unable to properly organize the work. If until now the government has worked tolerably, then this was due to Lenin and Trotsky, who led the work. now the prince's son, Stalin, has taken up the work (a hint at the legend widespread in Georgia that Prince Egnatashvili was Stalin's real father. - B.S.), who does not think about the peasants for a single minute, tries in every possible way to destroy our farms. For this purpose, he put forward collectivization, and everything that is being done, you yourself see with your own eyes."

An even more colorful legend was told in April 1930 to the middle peasants of Abkhazia Antsi Gurtskaya by a stranger who called himself Kalandarashvili: "Soviet power is already on the verge of death, and it should have been liquidated as early as January of this year, but for some reason it has the good fortune to exist. The existing women's movement (against the closure of the madrasah and the removal of the veil. - B.S.) must be strengthened, since this will be followed by an armed uprising of men, to which the Red Army will join, and then the communists will be finished. With regard to Comrade Stalin, he said, that he lay ill in the Gulripsh sanatorium, where he died. His body was taken to Moscow, but the Communists are still silent about this."

Eh, the naive peasant faith that the evil Bolshevik tsar is either already dead, or is about to die, and they, the peasants, will be left alone.

Agricultural machinery, which was generously promised to the peasants, luring them to the collective farms, sometimes turned into a uniform mockery of people and common sense. So, on May 6, 1930, Beria reported: "The single-row seeders received are completely unsuitable for Kakhetian conditions. In addition, the peasants avoid using them, since these single-row seeders increase the cost of the peasants' labor productivity. For example: to sow 1 ha, you need one horse, one seeder and two men, while in the most primitive way one man can sow more than two hectares in the same time.

The workers were also dissatisfied, who, as a result of collectivization, had nothing to eat. In Yerevan, the workers of the Armcotton oil mill, party candidate Alike and Sargsyan, told their comrades that "with the dispossession of the kulaks and the liquidation of speculators, the situation of the workers has not improved. There is nothing in the cooperatives, except for black bread. It is wrong that we have a workers' government. Who gets fat salaries, he lives well, and the workers constantly need and eat black bread. In case of war, they will send us first, while there is no care for the workers." Beria stressed that "all the workers present (17 people) agreed with this." The unfortunate looked into the water: workers and peasants were also required as cannon fodder for the coming WAR.

In June 1930, Beria compiled another summary of the attitude of the peasants of Transcaucasia to collectivization after the Stalinist article.

"Dizziness from success", published in "Pravda" on March 2, 1930: "During the war (the so-called shock period of collectivization), 35 trees were cut on my land and ordered to be silent, now who will return them to me," complained the peasant woman Maskharashvili from the village Hydari. And the middle peasant Pyotr Dzhimiashvili complained: "Both the government and the party are deceiving us. They promised us a lot, but in reality they didn't give us anything. I'm 65 years old, and I never worked as much as on a collective farm. I have one pair of bulls, which I brought to the collective farm. I needed to bring firewood for the family, take corn to the mill or take the sick to the doctor, and when I applied to the board, they refused me and stated that the bulls were no longer belong to me."

These complaints from the peasants were countless. But they did not pose a threat to the authorities. There were no political forces capable of canalizing peasant discontent, directing it to achieve political goals on the scale, if not of the entire USSR, then at least on the scale of the whole of Georgia, Armenia or Azerbaijan. The non-communist opposition was finally suppressed by the middle, and the inner-party, Trotskyist and Bukharin opposition by the end of the 20s. The army and the GPU were in power, capable of easily suppressing even local armed uprisings. The conversations of the dissatisfied were looked upon as material for future arrests and investigative cases.

When Lavrenty Pavlovich was at the head of the GPU of Georgia, he was not alien to liberalism. So, Beria constantly fought with the party leadership of Georgia about the "excesses" in the anti-religious campaign, and not only in relation to Muslims. May 3, 1929 in a special memorandum "On the Georgian Church". There he demanded: "Send out a circular letter to local party organizations, confirming once again the methods and framework of anti-religious propaganda with a proposal to stop all sorts of outrages that provoke the policy of our party and anger the rather loyal Georgian clergy and believers to the Soviet government. put pressure on the clergy and in no case arrest representatives of the latter without appropriate authorization from the GPU. Propose to the prosecutor's office to investigate all cases of robbery and arson of churches and bring the perpetrators to justice. Consider it absolutely necessary to coordinate the issues of seizing and closing churches with local bodies of the GPU in order to avoiding possible mistakes and systematic degradation of the Georgian clergy".

Lavrenty Pavlovich explained how he managed to tame the Georgian Church, despite the fact that the Catholicos openly opposed Soviet power and supported the Mensheviks: In January, it was possible to completely wrest the reins of government of the Georgian Church from the hands of Ambrose and, together with his adherents, remove him from the leading role in the Georgian Church. In April, after the death of Catholicos Ambrose, Metropolitan Christopher, who was quite loyal to the Soviet power, was elected Catholicos, and already a council that elected Christopher, declared his loyal

attitude to power and condemned the policy and activities of Ambrose, in particular, and the Georgian emigration.

Beria believed that after 1920, "forcing the closure of churches, pressure on the Georgian clergy was a response to the attitude towards the power of the clergy. Even during this period, churches were not closed by direct administrative decision, but an unrealistic norm for the number of parishes was brought to register the church, and if its church was recognized as inactive and closed... The Georgian church, despite its loyal attitude to the authorities, ekes out a miserable existence. Massive robberies of churches, arson and destruction of them, violence by local authorities, often with the participation of party and Komsomol organizations, lead churches to complete destruction and the unbearable taxation forces the Georgian clergy to renounce the church and look for new ways to earn money. land... The outrageous acts committed are unbelievable in a state governed by the rule of law... We have very reliable facts and cases of the Menshevik illegal organization using the committed outrages around the Georgian church for demonstrations against the Soviet power and discrediting local party and Komsomol organizations.

Lavrenty Pavlovich tried to convince his party comrades: earlier, under the obstinate Catholicos Ambrose, the church was pressed correctly, but still more carefully than now, but why continue to reduce it to the nail now, when the Georgian church is led by its own people? I think that in 1943, Stalin, on the advice of Beria, eased the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church, going to the option tested 16 years earlier in Georgia and placing a pocket patriarch, a Synod and bishops approved by the state security agencies at the head of the church.

A certain liberalism did not prevent Lavrenty Pavlovich from carrying out directives from the center in an exemplary manner. Following the model of the Moscow pest trials, he created the case of the local, Transcaucasian "Industrial Party". In the spring of 1930, a group of engineers and employees of Azneft, who were engaged in the construction of the Baku-Batum oil pipeline, was arrested. The mistakes and financial abuses revealed during the design and construction of the oil pipeline were declared sabotage - the deliberate squandering of "folk funds". On May 4, 1930, Beria sent the testimony of the arrested Anton Viktorovich Bulgakov, the former chief engineer for the construction of the Baku-Batum oil pipeline, to the chairman of the Transcaucasian Central Executive Committee, Mikhe Tskhakaya. Under the dictation of the investigators, Bulgakov argued: "The wrecking meaning was that for the capitalist circles ... it was indifferent at the expense of which department the money was spent on the construction of the oil pipeline under Soviet power, while the wrecking circles of the NKPS saw in holding the construction of the oil pipeline in their hands a pretext for making additional investments... At the same time, the wrecking circles of the Transcaucasian Railway were extremely inflating the operating estimate of the kerosene pipeline...

The members of the counter-revolutionary wrecking oil organization, as well as the former owners of oil enterprises who were abroad, clearly understood that sabotage activity alone would not be able to cause the fall of Soviet power and that the main

hope must be placed on intervention. In the event of such an intervention, the counter-revolutionary organization was supposed to help her. At the end of 1925, a letter was received from abroad through the secretary of the British Embassy, White, in English, signed by E.L. Nobel and Detering (former owners of the Baku oil fields. - B.S.) with directives on preparations for intervention. After reading the letter was destroyed. In this letter, which, obviously, was written at the request and on the instructions of the British military headquarters, it was proposed that the counter-revolutionary sabotage oil organization set up a special military group and carry out a number of measures to prepare for the landing on the Caucasian coast of the Black Sea (Lavrenty Pavlovich in terms of preparing for such the landing was also interpreted by the expansion of the Batumi port planned in connection with the construction of the oil pipeline. - B.S.) ... At the end of 1927 in Moscow through the Norwegian mission and through A.V. Ivanov (engineer, leader of the "saboteurs" - B.S.) was received from E.L. Nobel letter in English... It was reported that the military intervention planned for 1928 was postponed for political reasons for a year or two."

The Transcaucasian security officers acted according to the same scheme as their counterparts in Moscow and throughout the country. A group of engineers from the "former", still with pre-revolutionary experience, allegedly enters into contact with emigrant capitalists. Those, in turn, are connected with the General Staffs and intelligence services of England (France, Germany, Japan, Poland, etc., depending on the political situation, the region and the imagination of the investigators), they encourage their former subordinates with an early intervention, in anticipation of which it is necessary to harm Soviet power: to arrange explosions in mines, accidents on railways, fires in oil fields, etc. Such incidents during the years of industrialization are due to mismanagement, a lack of qualified workers and engineers, and most importantly, due to people's lack of interest in conscientious and productive work, in the USSR it was in abundance. So it was necessary to shift the blame on the "saboteurs" - "bourgeois specialists". Beria and Redens were not original in organizing the next "sabotage case".

The workers' messages about the condemnation of "sabotage" engineers were greeted with enthusiasm. On December 17, 1930, Beria reported on the responses to the process of the Industrial Party. In particular, the workers of the Tiframway expressed their sincere joy: "So they should. Let the surviving wreckers know that the Soviet government severely punishes those who raise their treacherous hand against it!" And they were upset that Ramzin and the rest of those sentenced to death received a pardon. This was also the position of the overwhelming majority of the workers. Baku workers, for example, insisted: "Such scoundrels should not be shot, but cut to pieces."

The proletarians were especially indignant that engineers had studied with the people's money, and now they are shitting, and even at the same time people are dying. About,

how thorough the accusations leveled against the "specialists" were, the working masses did not think. True, at the end of the review, Lavrenty Pavlovich also cited a critical opinion about the process of the "Industrial Party", stipulating that the persons who expressed it had long been developed by the GPU as an "anti-Soviet element":

Rustaveli... The draftsman of Yastrebov's office said: "Osadchy and Shein, who were public prosecutors at the Shakhty trial and sat next to the public prosecutor Krylenko on the left side, are now defendants themselves." The accountant Petrov answered him: "There was only one Krylenko left on the left side." And the accountant Blazhievskiy ended the conversation with the following words: "Nothing, at the next trial Krylenko will also sit on the right side of the court."

And how the Tiflis accountant Blazhievskii looked into the water! In 1938, prosecutor N.V. Krylenko was arrested and shot. True, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court judged Nikolai Vasilyevich in an expedited manner, without the participation of the prosecution and the defense, so the unfortunate man had to languish in the dock for a very short time - a couple of hours at the most.

Stalin also read the summary of responses prepared by the GPU on the trials of "saboteurs". Maybe he even borrowed the idea about Krylenko from there. Most importantly, Joseph Vissarionovich was convinced that the people are thirsty for the blood of their enemies, and, perhaps, they will accept the execution of former members of the Communist Party with special satisfaction. The workers and peasants do not like the Bolsheviks very much. And here it will be possible to blame all the hardships of "solid collectivization" and "accelerated industrialization" on the "bad Bolsheviks", diverting criticism from the main Bolshevik and a small group of "solid Stalinists". It was the monsters Trotsky and Bukharin, Zinoviev and Rykov, Kamenev and Sokolnikov and others who organized sabotage, destroyed bread in order to provoke famine, organized sabotage of the five-year plans. And they were helped by tens, hundreds of thousands of Trotskyists and Bukharinites throughout the country. That's who could easily blame the mistakes, arbitrariness and mismanagement of the nomenklatura at all levels.

But it should be noted that even then Lavrenty Pavlovich was not only engaged in falsifying cases against "enemies of the people", but also tried to correct some especially egregious flaws in judicial investigative practice. So, on October 20, 1930, he presented a report "On the main shortcomings in the work of the judicial and investigative bodies and the prosecutor's office." In particular, it was stated there: "There is a lack of planning in the work of the judicial investigative bodies of Georgia, an unsuccessful selection of employees in terms of their qualifications, a discrepancy in the work of individual parts of the judicial and investigative apparatus, a weak, and at times complete lack of business leadership and supervision by the prosecutor's office, etc. d". Beria pointed out "the need to staff the judicial and investigative bodies with party workers who are politically and theoretically sufficiently prepared, and to raise the qualifications of people already working in the apparatus, to organize short-term preparatory courses." He called for "strengthening the fight against economic crimes, using all means to identify violations of revolutionary legality, as well as participation

bodies of the prosecutor's office in carrying out shock campaigns: grain procurement, sowing campaigns, industrialization, collectivization of agriculture, etc. To strengthen the briefing of the supreme court and the supervision of the prosecutor's office over the activities of the judiciary. To wage a resolute struggle against the turnover of the staff of the judicial and investigative apparatus. Refrain from frequent transfers of employees within the judicial and investigative bodies. Take urgent measures for the immediate analysis of cases that have been pending with the investigators and

court."

Needless to say, the measures are reasonable, but in the specific conditions of the 30s, they are not very relevant. The Great Purge was just around the corner, when the turnover of employees of the investigation, the court and the prosecutor's office reached its limit, and the proceedings were conducted according to a simplified and accelerated scheme of various kinds of special "triples" and "twos". Towards the end of his life, Lavrenty Pavlovich tried to abolish the last extrajudicial body - the Special Meeting at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but did not succeed, and ironically became the last victim of another extrajudicial body - the Special Judicial Presence, which judged the participants in the imaginary "Beria conspiracy" without the participation of prosecutors and lawyers.

Beria had to deal not only with the courts, but also with the daily needs of people. It so happened historically that the state security agencies were engaged not only in their direct duties, but also in national economic problems, and oversight of religion and culture, and everyday life, because everywhere there were weighty reasons for "anti-Soviet sentiments", an eye was needed for all spheres of people's life yes eye.

On November 20, 1930, Beria and Redens prepared a joint report "On the mood of the workers and employees of the city of Baku and its regions in connection with the difficulties." The picture was depressing: "A worker (party member) of the gas department of the Surakhani district, in a statement submitted to the Surakhani district council regarding an apartment, assesses the moment he is experiencing from a clearly anti-Soviet point of view. "We are not considered people. Indeed, there is a great resemblance between modern politics and the policy of Nikolai P... They force you to go to the tsar - with petitions to the District Council... Comrades of the District Council, squeeze a spark of sympathy for the workers out of your brains.

At a meeting of the bureau of the cell, where the worker's statement was condemned as anti-Party, he tore up his party card and announced his withdrawal from the party. "Ilya Chernov, an old non-party worker who worked at Baku factories for more than 40 years, recalled Tsarist times with nostalgia:" Previously, Nikolai was bad, but lived like people. Now they say choropto, but nowhere will they achieve anything. You don't understand what's going on. The Soviet government is not doing well. "And the non-party worker of the 1st Drilling Directorate of the Leninsky District, Alexander Klein, was indignant:" Our newspapers write that in Germany the workers live poorly, that there is nothing there, there is great unemployment, etc. All this is not true. Workers live better in Germany than in the USSR. Here they came from Germany and said that their servants walk around in better clothes than we do.

"There is no such chaos in any state as in ours," said M. Shishkov, a non-party timekeeper of the turbine drilling department.

five-year plan and catch up with America. There are no such orders even in the most backward country, for example, in India. The worker eats like a pig, and if he tells the truth, he is considered an anti-Soviet element. Everything is sent abroad, we are sailed. And now they don't accept them there, so let's crush us in bursts. At meetings, they shout all around - we have, we have a lot. And we clap. We are considered fools. We understand everything and slammed all the good things." And the worker of the Pyatakov plant, Persian Ismail Hazrat, was brief, but categorical: "Who said that this

food difficulties. This is the time when the Bolsheviks must die."

LEADED BY THE COMMUNISTS OF TRANSCAUCASUS

Lavrenty Pavlovich had to compile and sign secret information reports all the time he was in high Chekist posts, where he remained until November 1931, when he was made the first secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia and the second secretary of the Transcaucasian regional committee of the CPSU (b). At the same time, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Georgian Cheka, the chairman of the OGPU V.M. Menzhinsky issued a special order, where he noted with great satisfaction that "a huge hard work was basically done by our national cadres, grown up, educated and tempered in the fire of combat work under the permanent leadership of Comrade Beria, who always managed to clearly navigate with exceptional instinct even in the most difficult situation solving the tasks set politically correctly, and at the same time infecting employees with a personal example, passing on their organizational experience and operational skills, educating them in unconditional devotion to the Communist Party and its Central Committee. The following year, Lavrenty Pavlovich became one in three persons, heading the party organizations of Transcaucasia, Georgia and Tbilisi. The same orders of the RSFSR, the Armenian SSR and the Azerbaijan SSR were added to the Order of the Red Banner of the Georgian SSR on Beria's chest. In 1934, at the 17th Party Congress, he was immediately elected a full member of the Central Committee.

On July 13, 1932, six months after he was appointed second secretary of the Zakkraykom of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks at the end of October 31, Beria wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Central Committee, Kaganovich, quite traditional for local leaders, asking him to reduce the agricultural harvesting plan and help with equipment: " Dear Lazar Moiseevich, At the present time it seems possible to summarize some of the results of our work over the past 6 months... The total area under crops this year exceeded the area under crops last year by 19.261 hectares. cotton by 101.6%, tobacco by 93%, tea by 93.8%, grapes by 97%.

This year's grain procurements will require enormous effort. First of all, about the plan. We very carefully calculated, checked and came to the conclusion that the figure set by the Transcaucasus is excessively large, unsustainable, and an attempt to implement it could create large complications.

In fact, the procurement plan for the Transcaucasus was left by the center at the level of the previous year, although the resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Government speaks of a reduction in the plan by 1 million poods. In past

4,044,000 pounds were given to the peasant sector. Together with the task for the state farms (400 poods) and the garnet collection, this will amount to around 5 million poods, that is, the same amount as last year. Apparently, the center did not take into account the undersowing we have in 1931, which we managed to eliminate only partially (in Georgia, the undersowing is expressed as 60,000 hectares). Last year, the task of grain procurement in the order of "counter" plans was overfulfilled, but the village turned out to be on the eve of the uprising, the peasant went into the forest.

This year, thanks to a large crop failure, the prospects are much worse. Crop failure caused by severe drought covered almost all of Transcaucasia, especially Georgia and Armenia. Under such conditions, we willy-nilly have to raise the question of reducing grain procurements to the level of real possibilities.

We have calculated that we will be able to procure no more than 2.5 million poods from the peasant sector, 538,000 poods from state farms, and 568,000 poods from the garnets, for a total of 3,605,000 poods (round). Thus, our plan should be reduced by about 1.5 million poods. This is absolutely necessary, otherwise we are not guaranteed from repeating the relapses of last year.

The issue of grain procurements is acute and needs to be resolved as soon as possible. The livestock census conducted this year showed a huge decline in the number of livestock in the Transcaucasus. So, in Georgia, the number of cattle is 1569.600 heads, it turned out to be available - 1.378.500, small livestock - 1653.600, turned out to be available - 896.774, pigs - 320.000, turned out to be 198.597.

The huge decline in livestock, which was the result of excesses made in the past, made it extremely difficult to fulfill the plan for livestock procurement ... The plan of May 10, by a decree of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, has already been reduced from 38 thousand tons to 28 thousand tons of live weight, but this plan is also tense and more than actually harvested by 4 thousand tons ... Only 19 regions of Georgia are not deficient in meat. " Beria complained that the total marketable output of meat was 3805 tons with a plan of 4500 tons: "The implementation of this plan (4500 tons) must, therefore, to go to its well-known part due to a significant decrease in the number of livestock, and without this it has suffered in recent years. "

He also noted the severity of the financial problem associated with the shortage of goods for the population: "The current harvesting of industrial crops (cocoons, etc.) is greatly hampered due to the lack of banknotes. Dozens of telegrams arrive from the field every day, which the State Bank is unable to satisfy. the payment of salaries is also delayed, which causes great dissatisfaction everywhere. At the same time, it should be noted that the mobilization of funds and the implementation of the loan are far from bad. For the mobilization of funds, the target figure was achieved by 93 percent (data as of July 5 in Georgia), on a loan by 75.9 percent.

The tense situation with monetary resources, among other reasons, is explained by the significant settling of money in the countryside. The commodity distribution network in the countryside delays and slows down the circulation of funds, on the other hand, the development of collective farm trade is not yet sufficiently provided with consumer goods, and contributes to the accumulation of funds from the peasants. The flow of funds to the village

currently far exceeds the possibilities of mobilizing funds from the population, and this creates a cash gap that hurts economic organizations and undertakings.

Beria did not forget his native Georgia. Of the two options for building new coke plants, in Ganja or Tkvarcheli, he advocates the latter: "Where to build coking plants in Transcaucasia: in Ganja

or Tkvarcheli. Both options have their supporters and opponents. However, it seems to me that all the advantages are on the side of the Tkvarcheli variant. Scientific studies and calculations made in connection with this by individual specialists and commissions of specialists undoubtedly establish the benefits of building coke plants in Tkvarcheli, near coal deposits.

Supporters of the Ganja option justify the construction of coke plants in the Ganji region by the fact that the waste gases of coke ovens can be used to heat blast furnaces. Meanwhile, coke oven gases are the most valuable raw material for industry, and using them for combustion is a crime.

The adoption of the Tkvarcheli option means the construction of a large coke plant in Tkvarcheli, which, in addition to coke, will provide for Dashkesan: nitrogenous fertilizers (up to 75 thousand tons), synthetic ammonia, ammonium sulfate, artificial alcohol and other extremely necessary products for the development of the most valuable crops in Western Georgia.

Not only the advanced countries of the West, but also our builders refused to build coke ovens near metallurgical plants using coke oven gases to heat the domain. Beria argued that the Tkvarcheli option would save 4 million rubles - otherwise, coal and scarce water would have to be transported to Dashkesan and use an additional 28,000 wagons for this.

Lavrenty Pavlovich proposed to plant subtropical crops in Colchis: citrus fruits and tea, which required draining the swamps. And he insisted on the construction of a new locomotive repair plant in Tiflis, since the old one, built back in 1883, was outdated morally and physically.

Beria asked Kaganovich to help with vehicles: "There are literally screams from the localities for help with vehicles ... We are facing the threat of the destruction of part of the crop of industrial crops that cannot be taken out even if all available auto and horse-drawn transport are mobilized. I'm not talking about that due to the lack of passenger cars, communication with the districts is extremely difficult and the fulfillment of urgent tasks is disrupted. The apparatus of the Central Committee has only one car in motion, which, moreover, deteriorates several times a week.

In negotiations with you and with Comrade Molotov, I was promised to allocate a certain number of trucks and cars and buses for Georgia. So far, apparently, it has not been possible to realize this promise. I beg you to help us in this matter. We need for the first time 15-20 passenger cars (Fords), 20 trucks, 10-15 buses. This is our minimum requirement, and I think that in the interests of the cause it should be met already in the current quarter."

I note that the requirements of the head of the Communists of Georgia are more than modest. I suspect that on the eve of the First World War, the governor in the Caucasus had a larger fleet of cars than Lavrenty Pavlovich almost two decades later.

Beria especially complained about the work of those close to Kaganovich

railways: "The work of the Transcaucasian railways has been deteriorating all the time, especially since May. If in 1931 the Transcaucasian railways ranked first among the roads of the entire Union in terms of their performance, now they have slipped to 9th place with a tendency to further deterioration. According to the NKPS, the Transcaucasian railways are in one of the last places in terms of high-speed driving, repair of steam locomotives and their operation ... The main reason for the current situation, of course, is the lack of coordination between the leadership of the road and its management. Hence the lack of discipline, intrigue, group struggle, disorganization of the apparatus, etc. There is no firm hand in management, in all matters some kind of softness, half-heartedness, indecision is manifested.

We need to put an end to this. It is necessary that the People's Commissariat of Commissariat of Railways should deal closely with the Transcaucasian roads and properly expand the apparatus headed by the directorate.

The other day I had a conversation on this issue with Comrade Papulia Ordzhonikidze. I told him bluntly that you can't fight with everyone, you can't always be at odds with the leadership of the directorate, with departments, with the secretary of the ZKK for transport, with the DTO OGPU, etc. Finally, business work needs to be established. Tov. Papulia seemed to agree with me and promised to improve relations. What will come of it, I don't know."

I'll run ahead a little and say that nothing good came of the promises of the older brother Sergo Ordzhonikidze, and it was his failure as a business executive that later created a good pretext for the arrest of the unfortunate Papulia Konstantinovich. It was carried out at the direction of Stalin by the newly appointed People's Commissar of Internal Affairs N.I. Yezhov on October 27, 1936, on the day of the 50th anniversary of Sergo.

Beria also criticized Mamia (Ivan) Orakhelashvili, recently dismissed from the post of first secretary of the Transcaucasian Regional Committee: "Comrade Mamia Orakhelashvili continues to be dissatisfied and pouts. He even stopped going to the Central Committee bureau. He is definitely not satisfied with the current situation, although I am doing everything to avoid it. He apparently does not understand or does not want to understand that in order to create a businesslike atmosphere: to fulfill the tasks that have been set before us by the decisions of the Party and government and your instructions, we need a firm hand, we need decisiveness and clarity in work, and the Georgian organization needs it most of all, since the departure of Comrade Sergo, intrigues and group struggle have not stopped.

Only a firm hand, a consistent and clear position can create a businesslike atmosphere of work and put an end to the endless squabbles that have corroded the organization. This was best confirmed by the experience of the past 7-8 months of work, and I think that this experience for many (with the possible exception of Comrade Mamiya) was not in vain.

Based on this experience, in this atmosphere, people have learned to work in a new way, to approach things in a new way, and I think that this alone is an important achievement.

Lavrenty Pavlovich added a very significant postscript by hand to the letter: "I visited Comrade Koba twice and had the opportunity to inform him in detail about our affairs.

Materials on the issues raised in this letter have also been handed over to Comrade Koba.

This means that Beria at that time was already a member of Stalin and made an eloquent hint to Lazar Moiseevich that the requests of the Transcaucasian communists would most likely be satisfied by the Secretary General. Lavrenty Pavlovich knew that the Ordzhonikidze-Lominadze group fell out of favor with Stalin, and did not spare critical arrows against Orakhelashvili, who was close to her, and Sergo Ordzhonikidze's brother Papulia (both of them died during the Great Purge). Obviously, the arguments set forth in the letter were understood by Joseph Vissarionovich. In October 1932, Beria was approved as the head of the Communists of Transcaucasia.

About the conflict between Beria and Orakhelashvili, which happened in 1932, was told to F. Blagoveshchensky in the late 70s by one of Beria's closest associates, P.A. Sharia: "The conflict reached the point that both were summoned to Moscow to make a choice in favor of one.

At this time, Akopov, secretary of the Tbilisi city committee, appeared at a party meeting in the IML of Georgia (which was headed by Sharia. - B.S.) to "sniff out" where the matter was going: he was sure that Sharia knew this. But he "didn't know" and in his speech he said that it was necessary to intensify educational work, that organizational work had been given too much priority. On the basis of this, Akopov decided that victory would be for Orakhelashvili, and behaved accordingly. But then the opposite choice of Moscow became known - and Akopov hurried to Ordzhonikidze (Vladikavkaz) to meet Beria, who was returning with a victory, and at the airfield to tell him about the "provocation" that Sharia had organized at his institute.

Shortly thereafter, the IML celebrated the 40th anniversary of Gorky's literary activity. Sharia was late (he was with a sick mother), asked to wait, but the meeting began without him. When he arrived, he took Maria Orakhelashvili (the wife of the first secretary of the Zakkraykom Mamiya Orakhelashvili, who had just been removed and transferred to Moscow. - B.S.) from the hall and led to the presidium with him - an old Bolshevik, People's Commissar of Education, member of the board of the institute. This was considered a demonstration, and soon Sharia "left" the institute himself. Published three books in nine months. Then, under the threat of exclusion from the party (this ultimatum was presented to him by Beria himself), he again returned to party work ... "

In the conflict between Beria and Orakhelashvili, Sharia "did not want group action, believed that" both sides are to blame ", and" directly told "them about it. But," of course, it is correct "the decision in favor of Beria. "Beria is a figure," says Pyotr Afanasyevich is "confidential", and his fist is clenched, as if reflecting the strong-willed character of the "figure" (something, but a strong, cruel will, to the point of ruthlessness towards others, Lavrenty Pavlovich really had. - B.S.), - "but Orakhelashvili ... " - and the hand relaxes helplessly, perplexedly, and the phrase remains unfinished. He

he adds about Beria: "But I would not let him go further than the republic. He never called him Lavrenty Pavlovich."

Well, about the fact that Beria's political ceiling is the leadership of the republican party organization, Sharia is probably right. Only it is not known whether this opinion originated with Pyotr Afanasyevich back in the 30s, or already in the Vladimir prison, after

the fall of an unfortunate cartridge. Lavrenty Pavlovich really succeeded in Moscow only when he performed administrative and technical functions: on Stalin's instructions, he cleared the NKVD of Yezhov's people, led the national economy during the war years, and led the work on the creation of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons. The attempt to play an independent political role after Stalin's death ended in complete failure in just three months.

Sharia also spoke to dissident R.I. Pimenov, with whom he was imprisoned in Vladimir, about the rather low level of Beria's erudition. Pimenov recalled: "The most intelligent of the Beriaites was Sharia. For a long time he was Beria's secretary either for science or for foreign affairs, and Beria was incomparably able to select people. Shatskin once quipped about Beria himself: "Since the time of Guttenberg, Beria has not read a single book "- and, retelling this anecdote to me, all the Beriaites agreed with the shot Shatskin; Ludwigov added that, demanding from him to get some book, Beria could not name either the author, or the title of the book, or anything about it, but described it color, format, thickness, in someone's hands I saw. By the way, clearly following the newspaper settings of the moment, they did not honor Beria except as a "cannibal", some more often, some less often, some through their teeth, some ardently. people (they noted, paying tribute to blasphemy), and his main principle was selection according to business qualities. a conspiracy against him: first they will mutually denounce (a very peculiar system of "checks and balances". -B. WITH.). And although by the time I met me all the thunderstorms of life had already died down for these Beriaites, they had been in prison for ten years already - they continued to hate each other, which was noticeable.

It is clear that under the conditions of the prison, none of the prisoners dared to say a warm word about Lavrenty Pavlovich. One of the cellmates will definitely report that the name is praising the "enemy of the people." And for this, a punishment cell or, in the worst case, even an additional term threatened. Moreover, the Berievites lived in Vladimirk like spiders in a jar. Sharia, even at large, in a conversation with outsiders, just in case, did not even call Beria by his first name and patronymic - so as not to be suspected of sympathy for the "Lubyansk Marshal". But about the fact that Beria almost never read books, at least fiction books, perhaps the academician was not far from the truth. After all, his son Sergo also writes about this, emphasizing, however, that his father leaned more on books on history and economics. In fact, as I think, Beria, like other Soviet officials of his rank, read mainly relatively short references on various topical issues prepared for him by referents, including the intellectual Sharia.

But about Beria's instinct for people, Pimenov was not mistaken. Lavrenty Pavlovich selected assistants for himself solely on the basis of business qualities and very successfully. And not only picked, but also knew how to get to do exactly what was needed at the moment. Otherwise, the Soviet Union would not have received an atomic and hydrogen bomb and rocket weapons in record time.

It must be admitted that the above letter from Beria to Kaganovich is by no means a unique document. In the party archives, many similar letters and ciphergrams have been preserved, both by Beria himself and

other heads of regional committees and republican party organizations. They include requests to reduce the plan for the supply of grain, meat and other agricultural products. At the same time, the secretaries usually advocated the placement of heavy industry facilities in the territories under their jurisdiction, although at the same time they complained about the shortage of goods - an acute shortage of food and everyday goods. The paradox was explained simply. Under conditions of centralized supply of all resources, it was pointless from the point of view of the local party authorities to locate light industry enterprises or large food processing plants in their own republic or region. The lion's share of their products would still be taken to other regions to support workers employed in heavy industries, which, as a rule, were of defense importance. So, by hosting a metallurgical, oil refinery or machine-building plant, one could be sure that the supply of food and consumer goods to the region would increase significantly.

But it would be naive to think that the requests to reduce the planned agricultural supplies were caused only by concern for the population of their regions, territories and republics. In fact, failure to fulfill the plans could well cost the local party boss the post, and in 1937-1938, the head. Busy about adjusting plans downward Beria, Khrushchev, the same Kaganovich, when he was the head of the Communists of Ukraine, and many others also took care of their own skin. Although they had sympathy for the unfortunate peasants. Beria, let me remind you, grew up in a peasant family, knew firsthand about the hard work of the tiller. Another thing is that if a categorical order followed from the center, Lavrenty Pavlovich, Lazar Moiseevich, Nikita Sergeevich and other leaders of the territories, regions and republics did not spare the same peasants, as well as workers, labor intelligentsia and their fellow party members. I note that for many, for example, Pavel Petrovich Postyshev, even increased zeal in reprisal against "enemies of the people" did not save them from death in the fire of the Great Purge. But Beria then survived.

Often, Lavrenty Pavlovich managed to make life a little easier for his fellow countrymen. So, on January 2, 1938, Stalin telegraphed him his agreement in principle to sell cheap bread to state farm workers: "We do not object to the sale of bread to workers of livestock farms for 5 everyone." Well, accounting and control for Joseph Vissarionovich - first of all.

When reading a letter from Beria to Kaganovich, it is striking that the head of the Communists of Transcaucasia very skillfully lobbied for the interests of the region and especially his native Georgia, with a good knowledge of technical details (an appropriate education came in handy). Of course, when Lavrenty Pavlovich advocated the placement of coke plants in Tkvarcheli, he did not know that in a little over ten years he would have to lead the most important defense industry of the Soviet Union - the atomic project, which subordinated the entire economy and the best scientific forces of the country to its needs.

During the period of Beria's leadership of the party organizations of Georgia and Transcaucasia, two incidents occurred in which, after the fall of the "Lubyanka Marshal", they tried to see him as organized provocations, with

aim to ingratiate himself with Stalin. In September 1933, near Gagra in Abkhazia, several shots were fired in the direction of Iosif Vissarionovich, who was on vacation there. After the arrest of Beria, they began to say that he deliberately staged an attempt on the leader in order to cover him with his body and thus prove his loyalty and indispensability. He recalls this event from the words of his father and Sergo Beria: "There is a version that in September 1933 my father allegedly staged an attempt on Stalin's life when he was resting at one of the southern dachas (N.S. Vlasik, head of Stalin's personal guard, erroneously attributes assassination attempt by the summer of 1935. - B.S.). The goal is clear - to earn the favorable attitude of the leader. A lot of fables have been written on this subject, but here is what happened in reality.

There were so-called special periods. This is when Stalin was resting somewhere. So it was in thirty-three. Everyone knew that Stalin had gone to Moscow. And the head of the GPU of Abkhazia, Mikeladze, a very good person, by the way, decided to take a break. I went with friends, as they say, "to nature", to relax a little. Having fun on the beach. They drank, ate, and then Mikeladze saw a border boat. Here, to his misfortune, the idea came to his mind to ride the whole company, and there were women in it.

In addition to the fact that Mikeladze was in charge of the state security agencies of Abkhazia, the border guards were also subordinate to him, as the head of the operational sector. But how to stop the border boat? He began to shoot into the air, trying to attract the attention of the crew. I emphasize, in the air - not on the boat. Who could have known that Stalin was on board the border ship at that time ...

The fact of the shooting was recorded and began to understand. There were hotheads who immediately regarded this as a terrorist act: they say, Mikeladze attempted on the life of the head of state. So the drunken stunt turned into an assassination attempt.

Father still managed to defend then Mikeladze, he got off with dismissal and transfer to a lower position in Georgia. He visited our house with his wife and lamented how unfairly he was treated. Father told him:

- Look, what else could you do? You yourself understand what is happening. They even reproach me for harboring a terrorist. Think you got off lightly.

Mom also worried about this family ...

In a word, Mikeladze left for Georgia and this unfortunate misunderstanding was gradually forgotten, but not all, of course.

When the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Abkhazia, Lakoba, died (in December 1936; after his arrest, Beria was accused of allegedly poisoning Lakoba. - B.S.), his death was associated with Mikeladze. And here's what happened. Even during the life of Lakoba, at his dacha, the daughter of the chairman of the State Bank (actually People's Commissar for Foreign Trade. - B.S.) Rozengolts shot herself from his own revolver. Tied up with this fact. They built a version - the investigator came specially from Moscow! - as if this girl overheard the conversations of the conspirators and was thus "removed". The GPU of Abkhazia was not allowed to investigate. A trial was held and several people were sentenced to

execution, including the "terrorist" Mikeladze. True, I heard that the Moscow investigators promised him his release and the issuance of other documents. Allegedly, his execution was fictitious, and the decision on Mikeladze was made almost at the very "top". They proceeded from the fact that it was not possible to break Mikeladze - he was really a very strong man - and they decided to take it with persuasion. But to assert that the former head of the GPU of Abkhazia actually managed to avoid execution then, naturally, I cannot.

The former head of the Stalinist guard, Lieutenant General N.S. Vlasik described the incident near Gagra a little differently: "In the summer of 1935, an attempt was made on Comrade Stalin. This happened in the south. Comrade Stalin was resting in a dacha not far from Gagra.

On a small boat, which was transported to the Black Sea from the Neva from Leningrad by Yagoda, Comrade Stalin took walks on the sea. He had only security with him. The direction was taken to Cape Pitsunda. Having entered the bay, we went ashore, rested, ate, walked, having been on the shore for several hours. Then they boarded the boat and went home. There is a lighthouse on Cape Pitsunda, and not far from the lighthouse on the shore of the bay there was a border guard post. When we left the bay and turned in the direction of Gagra, shots rang out from the shore. We were being fired upon.

Having quickly planted Comrade Stalin and covering him with myself, I ordered the minder to go out to the open sea. We immediately fired a burst of machine gun fire along the shore. The firing on our boat stopped.

Our boat was small, river and completely unsuitable for sailing on the sea, and we had a great chat before we landed on the shore. The sending of such a boat to Sochi was also made by Yagoda, apparently, not without malicious intent - on a big wave it would inevitably capsize, but we, as people not versed in maritime affairs, did not know about this (but attempts are not arranged like that: according to the principle, whether it will turn over, or not. - B.S.).

This case was referred to be investigated by Beria, who was at that time the head of the Central Committee of Georgia. During interrogation, the shooter stated that the boat was with an unfamiliar number, this seemed suspicious to him, and he opened fire, although he had enough time to find out everything while we were on the shore of the bay, and he could not see us.

It was all one ball. The assassination of Kirov, Menzhinsky, Kuibyshev, as well as the assassination attempts mentioned above, were organized by the right-wing Trotskyist bloc.

Nikolai Sidorovich did not have any love not only for Yagoda, but also for Beria, since he connected his arrest in

1952, after an audit of the Stalinist servants (then it turned out that Vlasik took cognac and champagne, caviar and salmon and various other delicacies allegedly ordered for Stalin for his own needs). And obediently repeated the version of 1936-1938, when the shots at Gagra were interpreted as an assassination attempt, organized by the Trotskyites and Bukharinites. The only fact that the former Stalinist bodyguard conveyed correctly is that during interrogations, the border guards claimed that the boat aroused suspicion

and therefore was shot at.

The documents of the investigation of the Gagra incident, cited by Nikolai Zenkovich, testify that everything that happened was qualified as a misunderstanding, when "you don't know your own." At the same time, the border guards testified that they acted according to the instructions: "The boat with Stalin, they say, was absent in the application submitted by him for passage in the protected zone." The commander of the border guards, Lavrov, said that "having seen a moving undeclared boat crossing the zone under his jurisdiction, that is, the Pitsunda frontier post, he signaled the boat to land on the shore. And since it continued to move on the same course, fired several shots upwards."

Such explanations looked quite natural in those conditions. Mikeladze, Lavrov and other border guards and Chekists could not admit that they had a merry picnic with the girls and decided to ride a boat while drunk. The version that this was a staged staged by Beria in order to increase his popularity with Stalin does not hold water. I wonder how he managed to persuade Mikeladze to take part in this kind of performance. The head of the GPU of Abkhazia should have understood that he would not be patted on the head for what had happened, even if no one was hurt as a result. And Beria was absolutely right when he told Mikeladze that he got off lightly - with a simple demotion (Lavrov had it worse - they gave him five years). But even if Mikeladze knew in advance that the punishment would be limited to this, he would still have no reason to participate in such a dangerous production. Yes, and Beria to arrange such games there was no point. Although he did not bear direct responsibility for the incident, Iosif Vissarionovich could still lay part of the blame on the head of the Georgian communists: after all, the trouble happened on the territory under his jurisdiction. In addition, in the case of a staging, no one would pass off an assassination attempt as negligence, as was done during the official investigation. Then it would have been more logical for Lavrenty Pavlovich to make sure that the assassins died in a shootout. And there would be no endings!

I also emphasize that neither in the fall of 1933, nor a year later, there were any dramatic accelerations in Beria's career. There is not the slightest sign that it was after the incident in Abkhazia that Stalin began to treat Lavrenty Pavlovich more favorably.

In principle, the incident near Gagra was the result of ordinary Soviet negligence. The border guards and the Abkhaz Chekists should have been informed about Stalin's trip on a boat in time. This was to be done by the same Vlasik and the head of the GPU of Georgia, D.S. Kiladze

(shot in 1937, as well as Mikeladze and Lavrov). But it was just difficult to notify, since Mikeladze and Lavrov at that moment were quietly drinking in nature and were absent from their workplaces. And when Vlasik in his memoirs draws a touching picture of how he covered the leader with his body, this is just a belated attempt to justify his own sloppiness. I'm still sure that neither Vlasik nor Beria then covered Stalin with their chests from bullets, especially since not one of the bullets fired into the air reached the boat.

Another thing is that in 1937, during the period of the Great Purge, when enemies of the people were sought out everywhere and assassination attempts on Stalin and other leaders were uncovered, it was a sin not to remember the shooting near Gagra. And the then head of the NKVD of Georgia S.A. Goglidze, who was shot together with Beria in 1953, presented, probably at the suggestion of Yezhov, everything that had happened as a terrorist attack. Mikeladze was arrested, and Lavrov was taken to Tbilisi from the camp, forced to confess and shot. But all this in the fall of the 33rd Lavrenty Pavlovich, of course, could not yet foresee. Therefore, Mikeladze quite sincerely consoled him that he got off lightly.

Why, after all, did the investigators Rudenko and Moskalenko in 1953 try so hard to attribute to Beria the staging of the assassination attempt on Stalin? Even if this were true, it would be difficult to bring such an act under the article. Is it possible to accuse Lavrenty Pavlovich of fraud? I believe that the most important task here was to try to explain to both the broad masses and the nomenklatura why Beria was so close to Stalin. It was necessary to convince the people that Lavrenty Pavlovich climbed up through all sorts of machinations, and not due to his KGB and organizational talents.

There was another incident in which Beria's staging was later suspected. In the summer of 1937, during a trip to Sukhumi, he survived an attempt on his life. Lavrenty Pavlovich stopped the car on the outskirts of the city and went out to stretch himself. Suddenly, three unknown people with pistols jumped out from behind the bushes. Beria's personal bodyguard, Chekist Boris Mikhailovich Sokolov, managed to close him with his body and also uncovered the "Walter". A driver and a secretary of the Abkhaz party organization ran to their aid. The bandits have formed. Sokolov's right arm was shot through with four bullets and he had to be rushed to the hospital.

Sokolov turned out to be not only a devoted bodyguard, but also a talented writer. Already in the second half of the 50s, he wrote a detective novel "We'll meet again, Colonel Krebs", which is still being reprinted today. By the way, this novel is the only one in Soviet literature where a seasoned foreign spy - a resident of British intelligence Krebs, although wounded, but safely escapes from the Chekists pursuing him. But what is most interesting is that this novel seems to describe the famous assassination attempt on Beria. Only it was relegated ten years ago, to the 1920s, and Beria, of course, does not appear there. But the hero, who has obvious autobiographical features, becomes a victim of this assassination attempt and receives a severe wound in his arm, which has to be amputated. I don't know if Sokolov himself really lost his arm as a result of the assassination attempt, but he was, in any case, seriously injured. This in itself undermines

the version spread after the arrest and execution of Beria that this attempt was staged by Lavrenty Pavlovich himself in order to increase his shares in the eyes of Stalin. However, the circumstances of the assassination seem to rule out staging. It is unlikely that Beria would deliberately cripple his bodyguard. And in any case, the bullets flew near Beria and could well have hit him, if only due to an unpredictable ricochet. Most likely, the head of the Communists of Georgia was then fired upon either by the Abkhaz opponents of Soviet power (as in Sokolov's novel), or simply by criminal bandits.

We admit that Beria was not only a good Chekist (with everything bad connected with this word), but also a good business executive. By the way, Lavrenty Pavlovich was absolutely right about the coking plants mentioned in the letter to Kaganovich. Indeed, for a long time abroad they have preferred to build them near coal deposits and preferred to develop coke chemistry, rather than burn valuable coke oven gas as a fuel. Characteristically, Beria was not afraid to call for an example from the "advanced countries of the West." Obviously, he was fully aware of the technical backwardness of Russia. It is quite possible that Lavrentiy Pavlovich could manage well not only in the conditions of the rigid Soviet administrative system, but also in the conditions of the Western market economy. Who knows if his life path would have turned out differently if Beria still went to study in Belgium in the early 20s. Then, perhaps, he would become a defector, go into business, become a millionaire, or even a billionaire. It is no coincidence that in 1953, having entered for a short time as a member of the country's top collective leadership, Beria advocated market reforms.

It should be noted that financial difficulties, as well as difficulties in fulfilling the plan for state agricultural supplies, remained a constant background for Beria's stay in Georgia and the Transcaucasus. Wage delays were as common in the USSR in the 1930s as they were in Russia in the 1990s. At the end of 1936, Lavrenty Pavlovich again wrote to Kaganovich: "T. Lazar Moiseevich! "We can't pull it out on our own. Why is that? 1) Few goods come to our region. 2) There are no goods for commercial sale. As for the collection of money resources, you know that this work is well done for me, and in the whole Union I go ahead of everyone. Absence goods cuts us. We need to help us somehow. I'll do everything, but without the help of the center I can't cope with the salary. On all these issues I'm sending Comrade Ter-Gabrielyan. Help us. Greetings, Lavrenty."

On September 6, 1936, Yezhov, as chairman of the CPC, reported to Stalin about one of the sources of the relative financial well-being of the Transcaucasus under Beria, on September 6, 1936: credited Samtrest to Georgia in the amount of 22.5 million rubles. Maryasin not only did not take any measures to force Samtrest to repay the bank debt, but, on the contrary, repeatedly delayed regular payments and carried out further completely illegal and

improper lending to Samtrest. In excess of 22.5 million rubles ... he issued an additional loan of 5,300 thousand rubles. As a result of such extensive lending, Samtrest's debt to the State Bank on February 1, 1936 amounted to 77 million rubles. "Maryasin received a severe reprimand and was removed from the leadership of the State Bank. Beria did not suffer. It can be assumed that Georgia's loans were issued with the approval of Stalin, Molotov, or Kaganovich, and then they made Maryasin, close to Pyatakov, who was soon repressed. It is unlikely that Georgia alone was issued loans of this kind. Probably, the case of illegal lending to Samtrest was needed as a pretext to eliminate another "enemy of the people."

Beria did a lot to develop the cult of Stalin in the Transcaucasus. Under his name, a book was published on the history of Bolshevik organizations in the region, where the main merits in the fight against tsarism were attributed to the "great helmsman." About this book, which caused the approval of Stalin, we will say further.

But Beria did not like the publication of a collection of early Stalinist works by Joseph Vissarionovich. On August 17, 1935, he telegraphed from Sochi to Kaganovich, Yezhov and Molotov: "I ask you to forbid Zakkraykom, for the personal responsibility of Beria, to republish my articles and brochures from the period 1905-1910 without my sanction. Motives: they were published sloppily, quotes from Ilyich are completely distorted, correct these there are no gaps to anyone but me, every time I rejected Beria's request for a reprint without my viewing, but despite this, the Transcaucasians unceremoniously ignore my protests, which is why the Central Committee's categorical ban on republishing without my sanction is the only way out. Send me a copy of the decision of the Central Committee " .

Stalin, of course, was not concerned about inaccuracy, but that his positions of those years on certain issues, the mention in a positive context of a number of names did not correspond to the political situation of the 30s. The articles had to be thoroughly cleaned before publication, and the obliging Lawrence, having released them in their original form, put his patron in an uncomfortable position. But Joseph Vissarionovich Beria forgave this sin. Moreover, he was actively engaged in a big and necessary thing: the organization of the Stalin Museum in Gori.

In 1934 Zakkraykom adopted a special resolution on this museum. In the homeland of the leader, it was planned not only to restore the house-museum, but also to build a cinema, a drama theater, a library, a hotel and a collective farmer's house nearby. G.A., instructor of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, who arrived in Georgia in September 35th. Sternberg reported to Kaganovich: "On the day of my arrival in Tiflis, on the 16th, I had my first meeting with Comrade Beria, who in general terms acquainted me with what was planned in the improvement and reconstruction of Gori.

The main provisions on this issue have already been reflected in the resolution of the Zakkraykom (No. 11, dated 1934 - 34). The specified resolution instructs specialists to draw up in 2 1/2 months projects and estimates for the construction of a theater, cinema, hotel, peasant's house, library-reading room and for the restoration of the house in which Comrade lived. Stalin. Simultaneously with the same resolution, it was decided to build lime and brick factories for this construction and release 300 thousand rubles to start work ...

A special issue is the restoration of the historic house, or rather, the house where Comrade lived. Stalin... I could not help but reproach the local organization for the fact that I did not find traces of careful care for this house...

Quite rightly, the question was raised by Comrade Beria and some comrades from the regional party organization in Gori about the need, in connection with the reconstruction of the district where Comrade Stalin lived, to evict 40-50 families, building 2 residential buildings for the resettlement of the evicted 20 apartments in each house. This, in essence, is a matter of additional 400-500 thousand rubles (in 1934 the entire budget of the city of Gori was 907 thousand rubles. - B.S.). But regardless of the source

the required amount, the construction of these houses must be carried out so that the evicted would feel an improvement in their conditions in connection with the general reconstruction of the area and the restoration of the house where the Great Stalin lived.

On the eve of my departure, I again visited Comrade Beria, who told me of his intention to leave for Moscow, where he is going to clarify with you certain issues and the most important points regarding the reconstruction of Gori.

During that trip, Sternberg began an intrigue around Beria's book "On the History of the Bolshevik Organizations in Transcaucasia" (1935). Returning to Moscow, on April 10, 1936, the instructor wrote a statement to the CPC, where she claimed that the spouses Sef and Yanushevskaya complained to her that in reality this book was written not by Beria, but by Sef. Later, in September 1936, she described the circumstances of the appearance of seditious statements in this way: "... In a conversation with me on the issue of Comrade Beria's book ... Yanushevskaya made it clear in a rather frank form that this report of Comrade Beria was result of the work of Sef. This posing of the question made me wary. Upon arrival in Moscow, in a conversation with st. Raikaya M.Ya., a member of the party since 1918 ... about Comrade Beria's book, she also told me that Comrade Beria's book - this is the result of Sef's work. I was able to learn this anti-Party chatter from two sources in Tiflis and Moscow, and it is absolutely clear to me that these conversations are much wider." Shternberg pointed out that S.E. Sef, and L.P. Yanushevskaya were members of the Leningrad Zinoviev opposition, and burst into an angry philippic: "I consider these conversations to be anti-Party, a malicious slander on the best student of Comrade Stalin, Comrade Beria. or March 1936, and Comrade Shatskaya, the instructor of the ORPO, I told about this much earlier (now upon arrival)." In the April statement, this passage sounded a little different: "I believe that Sef, who has retained himself in the ranks of our party, continues his vile work to this day and slanders one of Comrade Stalin's students, Comrade Beria." In August-September 1936, the CPC Party Collegium for Transcaucasia examined the case of "anti-Party chatter" between Sefa and Yanushevskaya and, apparently, expelled them from the party.

Looking ahead, I'll say that, probably, Sef's statements and the case of financial concessions made by Maryasin Beria were the only serious compromising evidence that Yezhov had against Lavrenty Pavlovich in the 38th, when he was appointed to the NKVD. But the loan story was not original, since all party

local leaders tried to get funds in Moscow for their regions. Most importantly, it was not Beria who was more to blame, but Yezhov's drinking buddy Maryasin. It would be simply not serious to go with all this to Stalin. Friendship with oppositionists Shlyapnikov, Pyatakov and Maryasin Yezhov was just accused after his arrest, during the investigation. As for the case with Sef, if not all, then many party leaders had speechwriters. Beria's book, apparently, was a product of collective creativity. During the investigation in 1953, Lavrenty Pavlovich was accused of plagiarism in relation to the former head of the agitation department of the Transcaucasian regional committee, Eric Bedia.

In the 36th episode with a book on the history of the Bolshevik organizations in

Transcaucasia ended for Beria without any negative consequences. On October 22, 1936, a member of the CPC Party Collegium for the Transcaucasus, Goryachev, reported to the head of the CPC, Yezhov: "According to the decision of the Bureau of the Zakkraykom of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks of 29 USh - 36, the Party Collegium of the CPC under the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks for the Transcaucasus is examining the case of Sef Semyon Efimovich, a member of the Communist Party (b) since 1919, and his wife Yanushevskaya Lyudmila Pavlovna, a member of the CP (b) on charges of anti-Party chatter, expressed in the fact that in a conversation with the 6. instructor of the ORPO of the CPSU (b) comrade Sternberg (now ", a member of the CPSU (b) since 1919) Yanushevskaya and Sef stated that the book of Comrade Beria "On the History of the Bolshevik Organizations in Transcaucasia" is the work of Sef.

In her statement to the Party Collegium for the Transcaucasus, Comrade Sternberg claims that Yanushevskaya, while in Moscow, in a conversation with a member of the Communist Party (b) since 1918, Comrade Comrade Raikaya M.Ya. (head of the Chinese sector of the Lenin School under the Comintern in Moscow) also said that the book of comrade. Beria is a development of Sefa.

In the same statement, Comrade Sternberg reports that she filed an application addressed to you in April and March 1936 about these conversations and informed the instructor of the ORPO of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Comrade Shatskaya, about this.

In response to our inquiry, Comrade Shatskaya said that Comrade Sternberg had indeed informed her of this anti-Party chatter that Sef and Yanushevskaya were having with Sternberg. T. Sternberg, in a statement addressed to the Party Collegium for Transcaucasia, indicates that this chatter with her was conducted only by Yanushevskaya.

Informing about the above, I ask you to instruct to interrogate TT. Raikaya and Shatskaya, specifying who led this chatter with Sternberg, Sef or Yanushevskaya, and the protocols of the interrogation of both together with Sternberg's application addressed to you, filed in March and April 1936.

Shatskaya, in turn, wrote a statement addressed to Kudryavtsev, a member of the Party Collegium for Transcaucasia: "At your request, I am telling you everything I know about the conversation between Comrades Sefa and Sternberg, Yanushevskaya and Sternberg.

In March or April of this year, Comrade Shternberg, a member of the CPSU(b), a former instructor of the ORPO of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b), came to work for me at the Central Committee, and in a conversation told me that she considered the talk of Yanushevskaya and Sefa outrageous that the book of comrade . Beria seemed to be preparing Sef. Sternberg immediately said that Sef was a former oppositionist (I personally do not know Comrade Sef and have never seen him).

I advised Comrade Sternberg to write about this to the Zakkraykom and, being myself in Tiflis, I remembered my conversation with Sternberg and asked you if the regional committee had received any statement. You answered in the negative, and then, a few days after my return to Moscow, I received a telegram from you informing me that Sef categorically denies everything, and you ask me to write down what I am doing.

Sternberg herself wrote a letter to Goryachev and another member of the Party Collegium for the Transcaucasus, Vatsen (it was received on October 19): "In response to your attitude ... from 14LH - 1936 ... I consider it necessary to inform the following:

Being on a business trip in Tiflis in the last days of September 1935 (in connection with the question of the reconstruction of Gori and the creation of a Stalinist museum there. - B.S.), I was with Comrade Sefa and Yanushevskaya and in a conversation with me on the question of the book of Comrade Beria "On the question of the history of the Bolshevik organizations in Transcaucasia" Yanushevskaya in a rather frank form made it clear that this report by Comrade Beria was the result of Sefa's work. This posing of the question made me wary.

Upon arrival in Moscow, in a conversation with Comrade Rayskaya M.Ya., a party member since 1918 (Head of the Chinese sector of the Lenin School in Moscow) about Comrade Beria's book, she told me that Yanushevskaya, being in Moscow, she also said that Comrade Beria's book was the result of Sefa's work. I managed to learn this anti-Party chatter from two sources in Tiflis, Moscow, and it is absolutely clear to me that these talks are much broader.

Sef member of the CPSU (b), 6. Socialist-Revolutionary, was in the Leningrad opposition and in 1926 was expelled from Leningrad;

Yanushevskaya, a member of the CPSU (b), was also in the Leningrad opposition and was exiled at one time.

I consider these conversations to be anti-Party, malicious slander against the best student of Comrade Stalin, Comrade Beria. I filed an application about these conversations addressed to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Comrade Yezhov, in April or March 1936, and Comrade. Shatskaya, the ORPO instructor, I told much earlier (now upon arrival).

Note: When submitting an application addressed to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, I did not consider it possible at the time to send a copy to the Transcaucasian Regional Committee ...

Party organizer "Minusazoloto", member of the CPSU (b) since 1919 Sternberg.

Earlier, Secretary of the Transcaucasian Control Commission Kudryavtsev sent a letter to the Special Sector of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks I.I. Shapiro, who was part-time Yezhov's assistant: "According to Comrade Shatskaya, an instructor of the ORPO of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, in April 1936, a former employee of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, comrade Sternberg, filed a statement with you about the anti-Party chatter of an employee of the Zakpartoorganization, comrade Sefa on regarding Comrade Beria's book "On the Question of the History of Bolshevik Organizations in Transcaucasia" In connection with the investigation of this case by the Zakkraykom of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, I ask you, if possible, to send a copy of Comrade Shtenberg's statement (as in the document. - B.S.) or report the results of Comrade Shtenberg's statement."

On this letter, Yezhov on August 16 imposed a resolution: "Give the material to me."

And Sternberg's first statement, dated April 10, 1936, was immediately found. It read: "I consider it necessary to bring to your attention the following:

Being on a business trip in Tiflis, at a meeting with Yanushevskaya L. - a member of the party (Sefa's wife), the latter told me when talking about the report and the book of Comrade Beria, that this report of Comrade Beria is

result of Sef's work. And further after that already in Moscow during the conversation of Art. Raiskaya (a member of the CPSU (b)) I learned that Yanushevskaya and Comrade Raiskaya said that Comrade Beria's report was the result of Sefa's work.

Sef was a Socialist-Revolutionary, an active participant in the counter-revolutionary Trotskyist-Zinoviev group in 1926 in Leningrad, exiled from Leningrad in 1926.

Yanushevskaya L., his wife, was also in this counter-revolutionary group and was also expelled from Leningrad in 1926. Now these people, who actively fought against our party, are spreading the slander that he, Sef, is covering the history of our party and one of the organizations, grown directly Comrade. Stalin.

I believe that Sef, who has retained himself in the ranks of our party, continues to this day his vile work and slanders one of Comrade Stalin's disciples, Comrade Beria.

I believe that this slander is of an organized nature, since I alone had the opportunity to hear this slander from two sources.

Sternberg was clearly under the strong influence of Beria, who at one time struck her with the project of restoring the Stalinist house of Gori and turning the leader's homeland into a real international tourist center. Her first statement was an undisguised denunciation against the former oppositionist Sef, who dared to encroach on the authority of Stalin's faithful disciple. But the ingenuous Sternberg (innocence was wonderfully combined with meanness) this time miscalculated. Expecting to protect Lavrenty Pavlovich from Sef's slander, she unwittingly did him a disservice. Yezhov immediately realized that there is no smoke without fire, that it is unlikely that Sefa's wife suddenly, for no reason at all, began to tell everyone she met that her flies, and not Beria at all, had created the landmark work "On the History of Bolshevik Organizations in Transcaucasia". In those years, the party leaders of the first row were still writing their own reports and articles. Although the leaders of the second row - the secretaries of regional committees and republican party organizations have already begun to use the services of speech writers. Later we will see that Beria's report was the fruit of collective creativity. But Lavrenty Pavlovich was just trying to get into the front row of leaders - those whose portraits are carried at Moscow demonstrations. And the fact that he would be convicted of appropriating the authorship of a text not written by him was a serious threat.

Probably, Yezhov immediately appreciated the importance of compromising information against one of the most prominent regional leaders and concentrated all the materials about the "anti-party chatter" of Sefa and Yanushevskaya in his own hands. Characteristically, Sternberg's second statement, written in October 1936, is already much calmer in relation to Sef and his wife. Maybe she was given to understand that she needed to moderate her ardor a little. It was more important for Yezhov not to condemn the overly talkative speechwriter, but to keep the head of the Zakkraykom on the hook. But then the thing

Sefa and Yanushevskaya did not receive their development. Beria was in clear favor with Stalin, and Yezhov, who had just been appointed People's Commissar of Internal Affairs on September 26, 1936, had not yet seen Beria as a dangerous person for himself. Eh, if Nikolai Ivanovich knew where to fall, he would lay straws!

So far, everything ended sadly only for Sef. Earlier, after being expelled from Leningrad, Semyon Efimovich publicly condemned his former opposition views and continued a relatively successful career. In 1927-1930 he was the editor of the Transcaucasian regional newspaper, in 1930-1932 he was the head of the cultural propaganda department of the Frunze district committee of Moscow, in 1932-1933 he was deputy director of the Institute of Red Professors. Then Sef returns to Transcaucasia. In 1933-1934 he was the head of the cultural propaganda department of the Transcaucasian regional committee, and in 1934-1935 he was the second secretary of the Baku city party committee. At this time, the relationship between Beria and his speechwriter for some reason went wrong, and Sef's career broke down. He is transferred from party work to a much less prestigious economic one. In 1935-1936, he was the chairman of the Transcaucasian Union of Consumer Cooperatives, and in April 1936 he was appointed authorized representative of the People's Commissariat of Light Industry under the Council of People's Commissars of the Transcaucasian Federation. Probably, this appointment had nothing to do with Sternberg's statement dated April 10, 1936. After all, he was given a move only in August - September. But some kind of conflict that occurred between Beria and Sef in 1935, in all likelihood, prompted the offended Semyon Efimovich and especially his wife, who was worried about her husband's career, to careless conversations. Like, Lavrenty Pavlovich used the fruits of someone else's labor, and now he has fused Semyon Efimovich to the pro-labour cooperative. In general, pomatrosil and quit. These conversations were heard by Sternberg, who just then visited Tiflis. And, albeit belatedly, but decided to write a denunciation. The consequences for Semyon Efimovich turned out to be tragic.

Semyon Efimovich was removed from work, expelled from the party, and in 1937 he was arrested and shot (rehabilitated under Khrushchev). I have no information about the fate of Lyudmila Pavlovna Yanushevskaya. Most likely, she was arrested along with her husband, but, as a member of the family of an "enemy of the people," they might not have been shot, but sent to a camp. It is not known if she lived to see rehabilitation.

I note that in his nomenklatura position - the authorized representative of the People's Commissariat of Light Industry for the Transcaucasus, Sef was not at all necessarily subject to repression. True, his and his wife's participation in the Zinoviev opposition left them little chance of surviving. Former oppositionists were the first to be repressed.

In Transcaucasia, Lavrenty Pavlovich took an active part in the terror of 1937-1938, widely used the beating of those under investigation authorized by Yezhov and Stalin. At the February-March plenum of 1937, he reported that in the last year alone, almost one and a half thousand Mensheviks, Dashnaks and Musavatists returned to Georgia, and "with the exception of individual units, the majority of those returning remain enemies of Soviet power, are persons who organize counter-revolutionary

wrecking, espionage, sabotage work ... We know that they must be treated like enemies."

And on July 17, 1937, Lavrenty Pavlovich reported to Stalin about the exposure of another "conspiracy": "A counter-revolutionary organization connected with Turkish intelligence and aiming at annexing Adzharia to Turkey has been uncovered in Adzharia. Organization

recruited supporters and followers in the villages of Adzharia, linking her work with emigrant elements in Turkey. The testimonies of almost all those arrested, the chairman of the CEC of Adjara, Lordkipanidze Zakeriy, are exposed that he is the head of this counter-revolutionary organization and is connected with the Turkish consul in Batumi and Turkish intelligence. Please authorize his arrest. Lordkipanidze is currently under surveillance to prevent a possible flight abroad. In the coming days, I will present the candidacy of an Adjarian for the post of chairman of the Central Executive Committee of Adjara." Stalin left the resolution: "T. Beria! The Central Committee authorizes the arrest of Lordkipanidze." It is clear that he did not consult with any Central Committee, but single-handedly decided the fate of the unfortunate Zakeria, who was not connected with any intelligence, and could only expect death from the Adjarian emigrants. But she overtook Lordkipanidze at the hands of "his own".

In Georgia, Beria, as the head of the local party organization, did the same thing that other secretaries of regional committees and republican party organizations did throughout the country in 1937-1938, not differing in any way for better or for worse. Moreover, the control figures for how much to shoot and how much to imprison were set from Moscow. The self-activity of the local security officers and party secretaries, as well as the prosecutors who made up the Special Troikas locally, was very limited and extended only to the lowest levels of the nomenklatura. How many innocent souls Lavrenty Pavlovich killed then in Georgia, there is no data, just as there is no layout of the number of those executed in other regions and republics. Of course, the local secretary, having received a general directive from the center to repress all former shareholders, nobles, Poles, kulaks and other unreliable categories of the population, could remove someone from the list of candidates for the Gulag or for execution, although he risked that in the future he would be accused of that covers the enemies of the people. It was possible, of course, to add someone, if only the candidate for the bullet was not in a very prominent position and his execution did not need to be coordinated with Moscow. The same Bedia or Sefa, for example, Beria, if desired, could well add to the list of those doomed to death. But it is possible that they got there without his participation, simply as former oppositionists. And Lavrenty Pavlovich, even if he had found out about this, would certainly not have shown any efforts to save talkers-speechwriters from the "tower".

How many people Beria sent to death in Georgia, I repeat, is still not known exactly. Taking into account the total population of the USSR at that time - about 170 million people, and the population of Georgia - about 3.5 million people, it can be assumed that out of the total number of 682 thousand people executed for political reasons in 1937-1938, the share the republic headed by Beria will have about 9.6 thousand people. But this is only

if we assume that the repressions were distributed throughout the country absolutely evenly. Meanwhile, there is no doubt that, at least in the capitals, Moscow and Leningrad, the concentration of executions was much higher - after all, not only local, but also all-Union ones were shot here. With this in mind, the real number of those executed in Georgia could be 2-3 thousand less, reaching 6-7 thousand people. Approximately such a norm of those sentenced to death - several thousand people was de facto established for the secretaries of the regional committees and most of the republics who held their posts in 1937-1938.

Only for Moscow and Leningrad, as well as such a large republic as Ukraine, it has already reached several tens of thousands of executed people. At the same time, the fulfillment of the norm in itself by no means gave a guarantee that the corresponding official would survive.

DID BERIA KILL? THE CASE OF KHANJYAN

Yes, Beria then, in Georgia, and later, in Moscow, sent thousands and thousands of people to the next world. But he killed them, of course, not personally, but signed a top-secret hit list or simply gave a verbal order, without a number. However, the murder of at least one person was personally attributed to Beria. As if Lavrenty Pavlovich shot the first secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia Aghasi Gevorgovich Khanjyan in his own office. But the circumstances of this case make it very strongly doubt that the latter died a violent death. Yes, and Beria was charged with the murder of Khandzhyan only almost three years after his arrest and execution, when Lavrenty Pavlovich could neither confirm nor refute them.

This is what the case looks like in the note of the Vice Chairman of the CCP P.T. Komarov in the Central Committee of the CPSU of February 8, 1956: "By the decision of the Presidium of the Central Committee of January 17, 1956, Khandzhyan A.G. ... was rehabilitated (posthumously) (in the proposal for rehabilitation, Prosecutor General R.A. Khandzhyan" was committed by Beria and his henchmen. - B.S.).

In 1955, the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office checked the statements of Khanjyan's mother, T.S. Khanjyan, who rejected the version about the circumstances of her son's death, considering him killed.

On the fact of the death of Khanjyan A.G. there is an official notice of the Zakkraykom of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks of Armenia, published on July 11, 1936 in the press, according to which Khanjyan committed suicide, allegedly in an apartment in Tbilisi at about 9 a.m. on the evening of July 9, 1936 by firing a revolver. In the message, the act of suicide was allegedly associated with the political mistakes of Khanjyan. Political accusations against Khanjyan have now completely disappeared and are nothing more than a cover for the fact of Khanjyan's death.

As can be seen from the available materials, the circumstances of Khanjyan's death were not investigated in due time in the manner prescribed by law, and the weapon from which the shot was fired was not established.

According to the testimony of those guarding Khanjyan, the last one between 7 and 8 o'clock. evening was found lying in his room on the bed with

gunshot wound to the head. Meanwhile, at the Tbilisi ambulance station, a call to Khandzhyan was registered at 9 a.m. 25 min., and the victim was taken to the hospital at 10 o'clock. 25 min. evenings.

After a consultation of doctors, Khanjyan was operated on at 1 o'clock. 30 min. on the morning of July 10, 1936, and then he died, as there is an entry in the transaction log. At the same time, in the act of autopsy of the corpse of Khanjyan dated July 10

1936 it is stated that he died on July 9, 1936. Khanjyan's medical history was not found in the hospital, although they are available for all patients of that period (it could be withdrawn later due to the political nature of the Khanjyan suicide case; after all, such high-ranking officials did not die every day in the Tbilisi city hospital. - B. S.). These data give grounds for the assumption that a fictitious operation on the corpse could have been performed.

In the ambulance hospital where Khanjyan was taken, according to reports, there were Beria, Agrba, the People's Commissar of Health of Georgia Mamaladze, the prosecutor of the republic Vardzieli and the chief physician of the Kirshenblat hospital. It should be noted that Agrba, Mamaladze and Vardzieli in 1937-1938. were convicted and shot, and Kirshenblat, sentenced to 10 years in prison, was shot in February 1938 in the Poltava prison by order of the NKVD troika without any reason. Guards Sanoyan and Mkrtchyan were arrested after Khanjyan's death and released after 1.5 months.

The act of autopsy of Khanjyan's corpse was carried out not by a forensic doctor, but by pathologist Jorbenadze. The specified act in 1955 was sent by the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office to forensic medical experts. Chief forensic expert of the Ministry of Defense prof. Avdeev M.A. concluded that the gunshot wound found on Khanjyan's head, according to the entry in the act, could not have been inflicted by a shot from a 6.35 caliber Lignose pistol (which Khanjyan had), but it had been inflicted by a revolver bullet of at least 7.5 mm caliber. The notice of the Zakkraykom of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks indicated that Khanjyan shot himself with a revolver (not a pistol).

At the time of the death of Khanjyan in the Zakkraykom of the CPSU (b) in the mountains. Tbilisi was the troika of the CPC under the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) as part of the chairman Korotkov I.I. (who died a few years ago), party investigator Comrade Ivanova, and the third member of the troika has not been identified, but, according to Ivanova, he was Sinaisky-Mikhailov.

In his statement to the CPC and in the testimony given to the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office, comrade. Ivanova reports that on July 9, 1936, in the evening, she, Korotkov and Sinaisky worked in the building of the Zakkraykom of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. Suddenly, 2 shots rang out in Beria's office. Tov. Korotkov rushed to Beria's office and lingered there for a long time. Without waiting for Korotkov, Ivanova and the third member of the party troika went to the hotel, where Korotkov later returned. When questioned by Ivanova, Korotkov replied that "a terrible thing happened," which will be known tomorrow. The next day, in the morning, they read in the newspapers a notice about Khandzhyan's suicide, and Korotkov then declared: "The Jesuit Beria killed Khandzhyan." Korotkov rejected Ivanova's proposal to immediately report this to Moscow, and also forbade her to do so, saying that "the story will be sorted out." On July 11 or 12, 1936, they left for Moscow by train. In the carriage compartment

Korotkov, who loved to draw, drew on paper Beria's office, where Khanjyan lay bloody on the carpet. Ivanova destroyed this drawing. She suggests that Korotkov, who was an eyewitness to this incident, depicted on paper a picture that appeared to him in Beria's office.

Ivanova's message about the murder of Khanjyan in the building of the Zakkraykom

finds confirmation in the following fact: the painter Gasparyan, who was repairing the house located opposite Khanjyan's apartment, on July 9, 1936, heard a shot in the evening and, going out onto the balcony, saw how Beria's car drove off from the entrance of the house where Khanjyan's apartment was.

Hence the version arises that Khandzhyan, who was shot dead in Beria's office, was taken by the latter's car to the latter's apartment, to the apartment and a shot was fired in order to stage a suicide. A few minutes later, Beria telephoned Khandzhyan, and the guard Sanoyan, who entered Khandzhyan's room on this call, found the bloodied Khandzhyan lying on the bed. An inspection at the site of Khanjyan's former apartment established that there was a second entrance to his room from the stairwell, bypassing the hallway and the room for the attendants, through the room that was then occupied by Amatuni and Guloyan.

As Comrade Khanjyan's wife, Comrade Vinzberg Roza, and bodyguard Sanoyan testified, Khanjyan, leaving Yerevan for Tbilisi on July 8, 1936, took with him a small-caliber "Lignose" pistol belonging to him, he did not take other weapons with him. In addition, Khanjyan told her that in Tbilisi he would resolutely raise the issue of releasing him from work in Armenia due to persecution by Beria, and if he was refused, he would travel further to Moscow, for which he took with him the necessary things. Thus, when leaving Yerevan, Khanjyan had no thoughts of suicide.

During the audit, the chief forensic prof. Avdeev M.A. expressed an opinion about the desirability of exhuming Khanjyan's skull with a thorough examination.

During the inspection period, the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office received testimony from Denuni D.M. and Manukyan, who live in Yerevan, that, being arrested in 1937, they were in the internal prison of the NKVD of Armenia in the same cell together with the arrested professor of surgery Mirza-Avakov, who was in their presence, as well as Vartanyan Grigor and Karagezyan, spoke about the real reason for his arrest. As he stated, in 1936, when Khanjyan's body was brought to Yerevan, Mirza Avakov was called to examine the corpse; having examined Khanjyan's head, he found a wound on the left side above the temple and that the shot was fired from a long distance, in connection with which Mirza-Avakov came to the conclusion that Khanjyan was killed, and did not commit suicide. Mirza-Avakov spoke about his opinion to Sergey Vartanyan and Manvelyan, and someone denounced him.

As has now been established by the USSR Prosecutor's Office, Mirza Avakov is listed as "dead in prison", and he has now been posthumously rehabilitated."

The members of the Presidium of the Central Committee unanimously approved Komarov's note, which contained the version that the treacherous Beria personally dealt with the hero-martyr Khanjyan. However, include this

episode in Khrushchev's report to the 20th Congress with the exposure of Stalin's personality cult was not risked. After all, upon closer examination, the version of the murder of Khandzhyan turned out to be a white thread and would hardly have convinced a person of Beria's guilt who was at least somewhat familiar with the vicissitudes of the inner-party struggle of the 20s and

features of the Great Terror of the 30s.

In Komarov's note, it was emphasized in every possible way that almost all the people involved in the case of Khanjyan's "suicide" did not die of natural causes. Beria, they say, removed the witnesses. But a person who remembered the Great Purge would have immediately guessed that people who held such nomenklatura positions as the prosecutor of Georgia or the people's commissar of health of the republic, and even belonged to the old Bolsheviks, and without any participation of Lavrenty Pavlovich, had very little chance of surviving. As for Dr. Kirshenblat, Beria could not influence his execution by the NKVD troika in Poltava in February 1938. Then the NKVD was headed by Yezhov and Frinovsky. The latter, however, had tense relations with Lavrenty Pavlovich even on joint work in the Transcaucasus. Would Beria really ask Yezhov or Frinovsky to liquidate the little-known prisoner of the Poltava prison as a dangerous witness?

The circumstances of the alleged murder of Khanjyan generally look like a complete fantasy. Lavrenty Pavlovich was not so ardent as to shoot his opponent in his own office in the heat of a controversy, and even at the moment when the CPC commission was working in the next room. The experienced security officer Beria, if there was an urgent need, would have organized the murder of the head of the Armenian communists in a more elegant way, disguising it as an accident, and certainly not in his office and not with his own hands.

It is also alarming that almost all references in Komarov's note to direct eyewitnesses of the crime refer to people who had already died by the time the party bodies and the Main Military Prosecutor's Office began to investigate the circumstances of Khanjyan's death. And the version with the transfer of the corpse from the building of the Transcaucasian regional committee to Khanjyan's apartment looks like a scene from a bad action movie. How, interestingly, Beria and his people could silently drag the lifeless body into the apartment, so that Khandzhyan's guards would not hear it. How could Sanoyan and Mkrtchyan not hear that a car drove up to the house, especially since there were only two cars in Tbilisi at that time and there were not many. And if they heard and looked out the window, they would become dangerous witnesses, whom Beria would try to destroy at the first opportunity, at least when he himself headed the NKVD. The former Khandzhyanovsky guards safely survived Lavrenty Pavlovich.

The assumption that Beria's henchmen did not use the security room, but the other room where the secretaries of the Armenian Central Committee Amatuni and Guloyan lodged, to penetrate Khanjyan's room, also does not stand up to criticism. It turns out that then two more people would have to be initiated into such delicate circumstances, one of whom, moreover, became Khanjyan's successor at the head of the Armenian communists.

It remains to be assumed that the Chekists threw the corpse of Khandzhyan through the window, and Lavrenty Pavlovich commanded: "Come on, bring it in! Be careful not to turn over!"

It is also strange that in Komarov's note there were no quotations from medical reports. It is impossible to understand on what basis

experts came to the conclusion about the caliber of the weapon from which Khanjyan died. Apparently, then, in the 36th, no control shooting was carried out from the "Lignose" owned by Agashi Gevondovich. However, this does not mean at all that the unfortunate man could not shoot himself with his own weapon. The newspaper report that Khanjyan shot himself with a revolver, and not with a pistol, does not mean anything. By tradition, in Russia and the USSR until the Second World War, all pistols were called revolvers. In addition, it cannot be ruled out that Khanjyan actually shot himself not with his own weapon, but asked the guard or one of his acquaintances instead of the ladies' "Lignose" for a more reliable revolver. The exhumation of Khanjyan's skull was never carried out. The 1936 autopsy report and its 1955 examination have never been published, and it is not even certain that they have been preserved. So it is unlikely that we will ever know for sure whether the head of the Armenian communists shot himself with a pistol or a revolver. The assertion that the shot at Khandzhyan was fired not at close range, but from a certain distance, is based only on the testimony of witnesses from the words of a person who died long ago by 1955.

It is also worth remembering that both in Soviet times and now, our experts are very inclined to find exactly what the investigation expects from them. And in the case of Khanjyan, as we will see later, both the prosecutor's office and the leadership of the party were much more satisfied not with the suicide of the one who was going to be rehabilitated, but with his murder by "the villain Beria."

The epic with the CPC commission looks like a fairy tale. Of its three members, only Ivan Ivanovich Korotkov, born in 1885, a party member since 1905, a member of the Party Control Commission under the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in 1934-1939, looks real. A certain Ivanova in Komarov's message is absolutely anonymous. There are no initials, no year of joining the party. On the other hand, she reports not only details that suit the investigation from Korotkov's words, but she herself claims that she heard not one, but two shots from Beria's office. This, as it were, refuted the possibility that Khandzhyan could shoot himself in the office in the presence of Beria: suicides usually do not shoot themselves twice in a row. The note also says nothing about the third member of the commission, Sinaisky-Mikhailov. Is he alive, dead? Korotkov, according to Ivanova, behaves more than strangely. He directly tells his colleagues that Khanjyan was killed by the "Jesuit Beria", even draws exactly how this happened, but categorically refuses to inform Moscow about it (and that one of the comrades to whom he blabbed would inform, it turns out, he was not afraid!). But if everything happened as Ivanova described, Korotkov became the most dangerous witness for Beria, whom Lavrenty Pavlovich should have tried to remove at the first opportunity. And the opportunity, by the way, was. After all, Ivan Ivanovich worked under the direct supervision of Yezhov as chairman of the CPC. It fell to Beria to arrest Yezhov. If he wanted to, Lavrenty Pavlovich could well have attached Korotkov to the Ezhov case as

one of the active conductors of repression along the party line and be shot in an expedited manner by the verdict of the Special Conference. Ivan Ivanovich was not such a big fry, so that the sanction for his arrest and execution had to be asked from Stalin. But Korotkov was not subjected to any persecution. True, he had to leave the CPC, as Yezhov's former subordinate. In 1939-1944 he was the director... what do you think? - Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts. Then he retired and

died quietly in Moscow in 1949. Such a prosperous fate in those harsh years is indirect evidence that, in fact, Korotkov did not see anything that Ivanova attributed to him. And Beria, like Khanjyan, never intended to kill him.

Also, the former security officer Suren Gazaryan, who went through the Kolyma camps and blamed Beria for his misadventures, touched in detail on the circumstances of Khanjyan's death in his memoirs. And here some curious details emerge: "Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia Agisi Khanjyan somehow does not show a tendency to be an obedient instrument in the hands of Beria. We must remove him. Beria sends his people to Armenia with a special task: to compromise Khanjyan in order to have a reason kill him. One cannot read without indignation the testimony of Beria's henchman Zhora Tsaturov, who knew Beria from joint work in the GPU of Georgia and Transcaucasia, about how he came to Armenia as one of the secretaries of the Central Committee and what intrigues he led around Khanjyan. But Khanjyan enjoyed great authority not only among the party circles, but among the whole people." Intrigues did not help, Khanjyan's authority did not suffer.

Well, so much the worse for Khanjyan. End justifies the means.

Khanjyan must be removed by any means. Only such a monster as Beria could come up with a vile plan to kill Khanjyan and carry out this plan with his own hands.

And the plan was worked out to the smallest detail.

Khanjyan was summoned from Yerevan to Tbilisi for a meeting of the Zakkraykom. That same evening, after a meeting of the Regional Committee, we learned that Khanjyan had committed suicide. They talked about the details, about the fact that Khanjyan had planned suicide while still in Yerevan, that two letters were found in his pocket, written in Yerevan before leaving for Tbilisi. One letter is addressed to his wife Rosa Windsberg, in which Khanjyan says goodbye to his wife, the other is addressed to Beria. In this letter, Khanjyan allegedly informs Beria that he is confused and has not found another way out.

All this was provided for staging suicide.

Comrades and friends who knew Khanjyan well were perplexed: how could such an inflexible person give in to difficulties, "get confused" and raise his hands on himself.

A quarter of a century later, it was established that Khanjyan was killed by Beria himself in his office.

Beria spilled crocodile offerings over his victim and sent Khanjyan's body to Yerevan with honors.

Not for the first time, Beria shed crocodile tears over his victim. The corpse of Nestor Lakoba, poisoned by him, has not yet cooled down.

The authority of Lakoba, chairman of the Central Executive Committee of Abkhazia, haunted Beria. Poisoned Lakob, he also solemnly sent to Sukhumi and

buried in the city center in order to raze this grave to the ground in 1937.

After the assassination of Khanjyan, Hayk Amatuni was sent to Armenia as secretary of the PC, but, apparently, he could not stand the "test", in 1937 he was arrested and shot. Then Beria sent his protegee Grigory Arutinov to Armenia.

Arutinov, by the way, got off lightly. At the July 1953 plenum, he described Beria as "a careerist and a man who by any means could do everything against the party, against the state for the sake of seizing power." And he was only removed from the post of secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia, but he was neither expelled from the party ranks nor tried. Grigory Artemyevich died quietly in his bed in 1957.

From the testimony of Gazaryan, who sincerely believed that Khandzhyan was killed by Beria, it is clear that there were suicide letters of the deceased to his wife and Beria, about which the friends of the Chekists probably told Gazaryan. Personally, I have no doubt that these letters are genuine, and not some "Beria fakes." Just a month and a half later, the same letters of repentance were written by former Politburo member and former leader of the Soviet trade unions M.P. Tomsy (Efremov), colleague of Bukharin. His name was mentioned at the trial of Zinoviev and Kamenev, and Mikhail Pavlovich decided not to wait for the inevitable arrest and execution. In his suicide letter, he tried to convince Stalin of his innocence: "I am addressing you not only as the leader of the party, but also as an old comrade in arms, and here is my last request - do not believe Zinoviev's impudent slander, I will never join any blocs with I didn't enter into them, I didn't make any conspiracies against the government ... Don't believe the slander and chatter of frightened people ... Don't forget about my family ... "About a postscript, he also asked not to attach serious importance to his drunken trick, when, in 1928, in the heat of the moment threatened him, Stalin, with bullets. Iosif Vissarionovich did not forget the "bullets", nor Tomsy's request for a family, having imprisoned his wife and children. And in the report of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks about the suicide of Tomsy, as well as in the similar report of the Zakkraykom about the suicide of Khanjyan, it was said that he committed this act, "entangled in his connections with the counter-revolutionary Trotskyist Zinovievite terrorists."

Khanjyan, contrary to the opinions of the naive Gazaryan and the not so naive Komarov, had very serious reasons in the summer of 1936 to commit suicide. He knew about the arrest of Kamenev and Zinoviev, that a trial was being prepared to accuse them of plotting to assassinate Kirov. And Khanjyan had every reason to fear that he would be declared a Zinovievite. In 1922-1925, Agassi Gevondovich was the head of the propaganda department of the Vyborg Party District Committee in Leningrad, and from 1925 he became the head of the organizational department of the Moscow Narva District Committee. The Leningrad party organization at that time was headed by G.E. Zinoviev, and, of course, such positions as the head of a department in the city district committee could only be occupied by a person who shared the line of Grigory Evseevich. Khanjyan, of course, had time to dissociate himself from Zinoviev. Otherwise, Agassi Gevondovich would never have been sent to lead the Communist Party of Armenia. But now, with the beginning of the Great Purge, the oppositionists were reminded of old sins. So

most likely, Khanjyan hastened his end by only a few months. It is possible that he took a suitcase with things for a long trip with him to Tbilisi only because he seriously feared that

I will have to go to Moscow immediately, only under escort. And Beria, no matter how sharp conflicts he had with the head of the Armenian communists, there was no need to kill someone who would have been shot anyway in the very near future, so to speak, in an official (I won't say legally) order.

And also, it seems, Lavrenty Pavlovich turned out to be more humane than Joseph Vissarionovich, and it seems that Khandzhyan's widow did not plant. At least in his note, Komarov never mentions that Roza Vinzberg (or Windsberg) was repressed.

I repeat that at the 20th Congress Khrushchev still did not dare to accuse Beria of killing Khanjyan. He did this only five years later, in 1961, at the XXII Party Congress. Then the majority of the delegates already represented a new generation of leaders loyal to Nikita Sergeevich.

I note that it was more advantageous for R. Vinzberg, who sought the restoration of her husband in the party, to present Khanjyan not as a suicide, but as a victim of the "enemy of the people" Beria, who had been shot by that time. Suicide was unequivocally condemned by the communist party ethic. In addition, the version of the murder removed the question of Khanjyan's Zinoviev past, which could serve as an obstacle to his rehabilitation. After all, the Trotskyists and Zinovievites, as well as the Bukharinites, had not yet been rehabilitated. The same Tomsky was reinstated in the party only in 1988. Prosecutor Rudenko, on the other hand, was very flattered to expose Beria also as a person who personally shot people.

The same purpose was served by the rumors that arose after the execution of Beria that he allegedly poisoned Nestor Lakoba. There was not even the appearance of any evidence.

Any dictator-ruler, no matter how many crimes he may have committed, receives in our minds the image of a complete villain only when we find out that he killed someone with his own hands. Killing on paper, with the help of written orders and directives, even hundreds of thousands and millions of people, is perceived a little differently than the death of one, but from a bullet fired by the villain himself. For the same reason, Hitler was accused of personally shooting his former friend and stormtrooper leader Ernst Röhm in 1934, although this is not confirmed by any evidence. For the same reason, they tried to attribute the murder of their own wife, Nadezhda Alliluyeva, or Sergo Ordzhonikidze, to Stalin. The German Fuhrer and the Soviet General Secretary exterminated millions of people, but only by written directives or verbal orders without a number and by the hands of thousands of executioners, and not by their own hands.

Perhaps the main distinguishing feature of Beria during the repressions of 1937-1938 was that, unlike most party secretaries, he had vast experience in operational-Chekist work. Therefore, Lavrenty Pavlovich himself delved into all the subtleties of the investigation and wrote very eloquent notes to the investigators: "Beat Zhuzhunava hard. L. B."; "Take hard to work"; "Take to work ... and squeeze everything out"; "Take him back to work, twists, knows a lot, but hides." By the way, Vasily Georgievich Zhuzhunava was

since 1928 he has been a personnel security officer, and in 1937 he served as People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Abkhazia. Zhuzhunava was appointed to this post already under

Yezhov, but was appointed deputy head of the Abkhazian Department of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs under Yezhov. Obviously, his arrest was made at the initiative of Yezhov as part of the permanent purge of the NKVD from Yagodin's nominees under him. In the case of Zhuzhunava, one strange thing cannot be ignored. He was dismissed from the internal affairs bodies in December 1937, and was expelled from the party and arrested as an "enemy of the people" only in June 1938. Perhaps Beria, under whose direct supervision Vasily Georgievich began his difficult KGB service in the secret political department of the GPU of Georgia in 1928, tried to defend his former employee and prevent his arrest. Lavrenty Pavlovich certainly had reason to worry about his fate. Indeed, back in 1920-1921, Zhuzhunava was the manager of the affairs of the People's Commissariat of Food of the Azerbaijan SSR. In this position, he undoubtedly communicated a lot with Beria, and in the event of an arrest, any testimony incriminating Lavrenty Pavlovich could easily be knocked out of him. Beria knew well how it was done. So Beria probably had serious reasons to fight for Zhuzhunava. But he did not succeed in this matter, and now he tried in every possible way to show that he would knock out evidence from the enemy of the people at any cost.

By the way, the investigation into the Zhuzhunava case was conducted just in the summer of 1938, just before Beria moved to Moscow. So it was difficult to suspect him of any kind of liberalism. The fate of Zhuzhunava is still unclear, as well as the time, place and circumstances of his death. Either they managed to shoot Vasily Georgievich, or he lived until the Beria thaw and got off with some years of the Gulag, where, perhaps, he disappeared into obscurity.

That's when Lavrenty Pavlovich got to Moscow, became a member of the Politburo, there the entrance ticket was already at a different price. For all those who were members of the Stalinist Politburo (later: the Presidium of the Politburo) in 1939-1952, the norm of ruined human souls was already several tens, if not hundreds of thousands of people. Beria honestly complied with this norm, although there was no such comprehensive purge as under Yezhov. But then Polish officers arrived, and other enemies of the peoples from the territories annexed to the USSR in 1939-1945, and "punished peoples", and "targeted" repressions against Yezhov's former associates, delinquent military men, cultural figures, like Babel and Meyerhold, and many others.

BERIEVSKAYA THAW

In the spring of 1938, Stalin finally decided to remove Yezhov from the post of people's commissar of internal affairs. It was time for the Great Purge to be gradually curtailed, and its main executor to be sent first into political, and then into physical non-existence. Already on April 8, 1938, Yezhov was concurrently appointed People's Commissar for Water Transport. Nikolai Ivanovich had to take to the new People's Commissariat many people loyal to him in the central apparatus of the NKVD, which objectively weakened his position in the punitive department. At the same time, this helped Stalin, in a completely natural way, to raise the question of

the need to strengthen the leadership of the NKVD with new personnel. And Stalin considered Beria the most suitable candidate for the post of Yezhov's first deputy. First, the person is unconditionally devoted to him. In-

secondly, unlike Nikolai Ivanovich, Lavrenty Pavlovich was not interested in Chekist experience: for many years he headed the GPU of Georgia, and was also at the head of the Transcaucasian Chekists. And this experience, in particular, in the light of the impending war, could be useful for operations abroad. But the main ones, of course, in the appointment of Beria were considerations of an internal order. Yezhov and his people needed to be removed from the NKVD and from life as soon as possible. And Lavrenty Pavlovich, with his experience, will easily figure out which of the Chekists to execute and whom to pardon, and, according to old memory, he will quickly be able to replace Yezhov's nominees who have fallen out of action with cadres of Transcaucasian Chekists who are well known to him.

And, as ordered, a wonderful occasion presented itself for the removal of Yezhov. In June 1938, the head of the Far Eastern Department of Internal Affairs, G.S., fled to the Japanese. Lyushkov, who, not without reason, feared arrest. Yezhov realized that his turn would soon come. In a letter of confession to Stalin at the end of November, after his removal from the NKVD, Nikolai Ivanovich wrote: "The moment of Lyushkov's flight was decisive. I literally went crazy. I called Frinovsky and offered to go together to report to you. Frinovsky, I said: "Well, now we will be severely punished ..." I understood that you should have a wary attitude towards the work of the NKVD. It was so. I felt it all the time. "

The incident with Lyushkov served as a pretext for the appointment of Beria on August 22 as the first deputy people's commissar of internal affairs. The former leaders of the NKVD made a desperate attempt to topple Lavrenty Pavlovich. In a letter of repentance to Stalin, Yezhov admitted: "I was worried ... about the appointment of Comrade Beria. I saw in this an element of distrust in myself, but I thought everything would pass. that his appointment is the preparation of my release (I thought correctly! - B.S.) ... Frinovsky advised: "Keep the reins firmly in your hands. Do not mope, but firmly grasp the apparatus so that it does not double between Comrade Beria and me. Do not allow Comrade Beria's people into the apparatus ". Frinovsky in the early 30s worked as chairman of the GPU of Azerbaijan and often clashed with Beria as one of the leaders of the Transcaucasian GPU. Now Mikhail Petrovich warned Yezhov what a dangerous enemy he was. It was decided to present to Stalin compromising material on Beria - data on his service in the Musavat counterintelligence. However, Stalin was already aware of how things were in reality (remember Pavlunovsky's letter), and he had long predetermined Yezhov's fate.

It fell to Beria to moderate the scope of repression. On September 8, 1939, another first deputy people's commissar of internal affairs, M.P. Frinovsky was appointed People's Commissar of the Navy, and on September 29, the Main Directorate of State Security was transferred to Beria. By the beginning of October, Yezhov had practically lost control over the main structures of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs.

The members of the Central Committee and the government suddenly saw the light. The decree of November 17, 1938 stated: "Mass operations to defeat and uproot enemy elements, carried out by the NKVD in 1937-1938, with a simplified investigation and trial, could not but lead to a number of major shortcomings and perversions in the work of the NKVD bodies and the prosecutor's office. ... The workers of the NKVD are so unaccustomed to painstaking,

systematic intelligence work and so entered the taste of the simplified procedure for the production of cases that, until very recently, questions have been raised about granting them so-called "limits" for the production of mass arrests. "The simplified investigation procedure itself was condemned, when" the investigator is limited to receiving from the accused admitting his guilt and does not at all care about supporting this confession with the necessary documentary data, and "the testimony of the arrested person is recorded by the investigators in the form of notes, and then, after a long time ... a general protocol is drawn up, and the requirement ... for verbatim, according to opportunities, fixing the testimony of the arrested person. Very often, the interrogation protocol is not drawn up until the arrested person confesses to the crimes he has committed. Now the NKVD and the prosecutor's office were forbidden to carry out mass arrests and evictions. Any arrests were allowed only with the sanction of the prosecutor's office or a court order. Judicial troikas that delivered sentences according to a simplified procedure, without the participation of the defense and prosecution, were also eliminated. All cases from the triples were transferred to the courts or to the Special Conference under the NKVD of the USSR. The investigators were required to comply with the rules of criminal procedure, namely: to complete the investigation within the time limits established by law, to interrogate the arrested no later than 24 hours after their arrest, and to draw up a protocol immediately after the end of the interrogation.

Realizing that his song was sung, Nikolai Ivanovich, according to Russian custom, went on a drinking binge. On November 23, 1938, he submitted his resignation. On November 24, the Politburo dismissed Yezhov from the post of People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, retaining for him the already meaningless posts of Secretary of the Central Committee, Chairman of the Party Control Committee and People's Commissar of Water Transport. Beria became Yezhov's successor in the NKVD. In April 1939, Nikolai Ivanovich was arrested. The people of Lavrenty Pavlovich beat Nikolai Ivanovich to glory. On February 2, 1940, in his last speech, Yezhov, in the face of imminent execution, stated: "Yesterday, in a conversation with Beria, he told me:" Do not think that you will definitely be shot. If you confess and tell everything honestly, your life will be saved. "After a conversation with Beria, I decided that death is better, but to leave life honestly and tell only the real truth before the court. At the preliminary investigation, I said that I was not a spy, that I'm not a terrorist, but they didn't believe me and beat me up." Of course, the refusal of confessions to espionage and conspiracy, knocked out during the investigation, did not affect the fate of the "steel people's commissar" in any way. On February 4, 1940, Nikolai Ivanovich was shot.

On November 25, 1938, Stalin informed the first secretaries of the Communist Parties of the republics, as well as regional committees and regional committees, with a special cipher message about the changes that had taken place in the NKVD: "In mid-November of the current

year, the Central Committee received a statement from Comrade Zhuravlev (head of the NKVD) from the Ivanovo region about trouble in the NKVD apparatus, about mistakes in the work of the NKVD, about an inattentive attitude to signals from the field warning of the betrayal of Litvin, Kamensky, Radzivilovsky, Tsesarsky, Shapiro (that himself, who had to deal with the case of Sefa. -BS) and other senior officials of the NKVD, that People's Commissar Comrade Yezhov did not respond to these warnings, etc. d.

At the same time, the Central Committee received information that after the defeat of the Yagoda gang, another gang of traitors appeared in the NKVD of the USSR, such as Nikolaev, Zhukovsky, Lyushkov, Uspensky, Passov, Fedorov (all of them, except for Litvin, who shot himself and Lyushkov, who fled to the Japanese, had a chance to shoot already Beria. - B.S.), who deliberately confuse investigative cases, shield the notorious enemies of the people, and these people do not meet with sufficient opposition from Comrade Yezhov.

Having raised the question of the state of affairs in the NKVD for discussion, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks demanded an explanation from Comrade Yezhov. Tov. Yezhov filed a statement where he admitted the above mistakes, he also admitted that he was responsible for not taking measures against the flight of Lyushkov (UNKVD of the Far East), the flight of Uspensky (People's Commissar of the NKVD of Ukraine) (six months later, Uspensky was caught by Beria's people. - B. S.), admitted that he clearly failed to cope with his tasks in the NKVD and asked to be relieved of his duties as People's Commissar of the NKVD, retaining his posts in the People's Commissariat for Water and in the line of work in the bodies of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks.

The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks granted the request of comrade Yezhov, released him from work in the NKVD and approved him as People's Commissar of the NKVD of the USSR at the unanimous proposal of members of the Central Committee, including comrade Yezhov, the current deputy NKVD comrade. Beria L.P.

You will receive the text of Comrade Yezhov's statement by mail.

With this message immediately acquaint the heads of the NKVD.

The change of power in the people's commissariat went off without a hitch. Not only did not one of the heads of the regional and republican departments of internal affairs come out in defense of Yezhov, and even more so did not try to raise a rebellion against Stalin, but even none of them tried to escape, as Lyushkov (successfully) and Uspensky (unsuccessfully) did earlier. The Chekists of Yezhov's call meekly awaited their fate, like sheep brought to the slaughterhouse, and few of them survived. Beria, on the orders of Stalin, carried out a large-scale "changing of the guard" in his department. And there was only one way out of the system at the general level: suicide or execution. Living witnesses of previous extrajudicial executions were preferred not to be left alive.

On November 26, Beria, as head of the NKVD, signed an order on the procedure for implementing the decree of November 17. Those arrested were released from prisons who did not admit their guilt, as well as many of those for whom there was no other evidence, except for the confessions knocked out by the investigators, which they later retracted. In 1939, Beria issued a series of orders to remove from office and bring to trial NKVD workers guilty of falsifying criminal cases. On November 9, 1939, an order "On shortcomings in the investigative work of the NKVD bodies" appeared, ordering to release from custody all illegally

arrested and establish strict control over the observance of criminal procedural norms.

Beriev's nominees, whom he took with him to Moscow in August of the 38th, occupied responsible posts in the NKVD system. Bogdan Kobulov, former Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Georgia, on September 29, 1938, was appointed head of the 2nd department of the Main

state security department. And on December 17 of the same year, Bogdan Zakharovich became deputy head of the GUGB and head of the investigative unit of the NKVD. His brother Amayak back in September 1938 was just the head of the NKVD district department in Gagra. But already in October, he began to act as People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Abkhazia, and on December 7 he was appointed First Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. Former People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Georgia S.A. Goglidze became head of the Leningrad NKVD. A.N. made Beria the new People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Georgia. Rapava, the former head of the Council of People's Commissars of Abkhazia, who began his career in the Georgian Cheka as an authorized representative of the Special Department back in 1924. The former head of the industrial and transport department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia V.N. Lavrenty Pavlovich made Merkulov his first deputy and head of the Main Directorate of State Security. Vsevolod Nikolaevich was not only a personnel security officer from the age of 21 and served under Beria in the Georgian GPU. He wrote good plays under the pseudonym "Vsevolod Rokk" (I don't know if my acquaintance with Mikhail Bulgakov's story "Fatal Eggs" influenced the choice of the pseudonym, where the character who, due to his own negligence, caused the catastrophic campaign against Moscow of giant reptiles, is called Alexander Semenovich Rokk). Merkulov's play "Engineer Sergeev" - about the fight against "fascist spies" was successfully staged in the capital's theaters. But under his own name, Vsevolod Nikolaevich published a brochure "Lavrenty Beria - the faithful son of the Lenin-Stalin party." In February 41st, at the suggestion of Lavrenty Pavlovich, Merkulov was appointed People's Commissar of State Security of the USSR. True, in the future, Beria became disillusioned with his business qualities and, perhaps, became one of the initiators of his dismissal from the post of head of the state security organs after the Great Patriotic War. Another colleague of Beria in Transcaucasia, the former head of the State Planning Committee of Georgia V.G. Dekanozov, in December 1938 became the head of the intelligence and counterintelligence departments and deputy head of the NKVD GUGB. Vladimir Georgievich worked together with Lavrenty Pavlovich back in the Baku underground.

These are just some of the most famous of those who worked with Beria in the Transcaucasus, and then took important positions in the central apparatus of the NKVD. Lavrenty Pavlovich himself, after the 18th party congress in March 1939, was elected a candidate member of the Politburo.

Accurate data on the number of those released from prisons in 1938-1941 as part of the so-called "Beria Thaw" have not yet been published, as well as information on the number of those arrested during the same period on political charges. Sergo Beria believes that there were 750-800 thousand of the first, and 20-25 thousand of the second. It is possible to doubt the accuracy of these figures. It is not very hard to believe that hundreds of thousands were released, and only tens of thousands were imprisoned. In any case, between 1

January 1939 to January 1, 1941, the number of those convicted of counter-revolutionary activities in forced labor camps decreased by only 34 thousand people. Prior to that, in 1938 alone, it increased almost two and a half times - from 185 to 454 thousand. With the advent of Beria, the number of prisoners in prisons first decreased - from January to September of the 39th year from 351 to 178 thousand. But since September, their number began to grow again - a stream of arrested people began from the "liberated territories" - Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, and later - from the Baltic states and Bessarabia. Except

In addition, from the summer of 1940, prisoners began to be placed in prisons for a period of 2 to 4 months for being late for work, producing low-quality products, absenteeism, etc. By December 1, 1940, there were 133 thousand of them. As a result, in January 1941, the prison population peaked at 488,000, only to fall back to 333,000 by May. By that time, many of those arrested had been convicted and sent to camps. In total, 540 thousand prisoners were released from corrective labor camps in 1939-1940. For comparison: in 1937-1938, 644 thousand people left the camps. The largest number of prisoners gained freedom in 1941 - 624 thousand, but the war was a powerful factor here. A significant part of the men from the camps were released ahead of schedule in order to make up for the colossal losses that the Red Army suffered at the front. In addition, the majority of those released were not political, but criminal articles, and were released in connection with the expiration of the term of imprisonment, and not because of rehabilitation or amnesty. There is only fragmentary information about the number of prisoners rehabilitated at that time. So, on January 1, 1941, there were 34 thousand liberated from the camps in Kolyma, of which 3 thousand were considered fully rehabilitated. It is clear, however, that the total number of those rehabilitated and amnestied on political grounds could amount to tens, but by no means hundreds of thousands of people.

Here the number of those shot with the advent of Beria really decreased by an order of magnitude. For the entire period of 1921-1953, 786,098 people were sentenced to death on political grounds. Of this number, 681,692 were shot in 1937-1938, of which 631,897 were sentenced by extrajudicial troikas. Thus, almost half of the 1,372,000 arrested for "counter-revolutionary crimes" during the "Yezhovshchina" period were executed. And in just over two years of being in the NKVD of the sad memory of Nikolai Ivanovich, almost seven-eighths of the total number of those sentenced to death under political articles over the three decades of Stalin's rule were shot. But it cannot be said that Beria is to blame for the end of the terror. It was not he who made the decisions, but Stalin. However, it is just as unreasonable to lay responsibility for the later repressions on Lavrenty Pavlovich alone. Stalin and other members of the country's top political leadership should share it with him in fairness.

Of the more than 104 thousand executed in 1921-1936 and 1939-1953, the lion's share falls on the time when Beria was at the head of the NKVD. In the "vegetarian" 20s and the first half of the 30s, the number of those executed for political reasons hardly exceeded 1-2 thousand people. True, this obviously does not include the victims of collectivization, including those who were shot during the suppression of the uprisings caused by it.

There could be several tens of thousands of such people. Also after the war, under Abakumov and Ignatiev, the number of those executed was only a few thousand people. Thus, the number of those executed during Beria's tenure as People's Commissar of Internal Affairs can be estimated at a little less than 100 thousand people. True, it should be noted that the official figures of those executed in these years are underestimated by several tens of thousands. So, according to archival data cited by the historian M.I. Semiryaga, in 1939-1940 only 4464 people were executed for political reasons. Meanwhile, in 1940 alone, almost 22,000 Polish officers and civilians, representatives of the intelligentsia and the propertied classes, were executed. It is also unlikely that thousands of political prisoners were included in the official statistics,

shot during the evacuation from prisons in the western regions subjected to German occupation. These executions were sanctioned by Beria. So, only by July 12, 1941 in the Lvov region "departed according to the 1st category" (a euphemism for execution in the documents of the NKVD) 2464 political prisoners, in the Drobych region - 1101, in the Stanislav region - 1000 people, in the Tarnopol region - 674 and 18 more were killed "while trying to escape", in the Rivne region - 230, in the Volyn region - 231, in the Chernivtsi region - 16, in the Zhytomyr region - 47, in the Kiev region - 125. Such was the picture in Ukraine. In Belarus, due to the rapid advance of the Germans in many prisons, none of the "political" "received in the 1st category" did not have time. In his report dated September 3, 1941, the deputy head of the prison department of the NKVD of Belarus M.P. Opalev reported that only the political officer of the prison in the city of Oshmyany Klimenko and the assistant commissioner Avdeev, on their own initiative, managed to shoot 30 people accused of "counter-revolutionary crimes", but they did not have time to bury the corpses, which was blamed on them (they tried to mask the traces of crimes). In addition, the head of the prison in the city of Glubokoe, Priemyshev, shot 600 Polish prisoners while walking on foot, who allegedly shouted: "Long live Hitler!" The latter seems completely unbelievable, given both the dislike of the Poles for Hitler and the fact that this happened in the Soviet rear. Most likely, Priemyshev invented this in order to justify the execution. He was arrested, but a member of the Military Council of the Central Front P.K. Ponomarenko recognized Priemyshev's actions as correct and released him from custody. In all likelihood, some of the political prisoners were shot in the prisons of Molodechno, Pinsk, Polotsk, Vitebsk, Gomel, Mozyr, Mogilev and some other cities, from which the prisoners were evacuated to the east. However, there is no data on the number of "departed in the 1st category" in these prisons.

Thus, only in those Ukrainian and Belarusian prisons for which information is available, the number of liquidated political prisoners is more than 6.5 thousand. But the unfortunate prisoners were also shot in other regions and republics that were subjected to German occupation. And in 1939-1940, not only 22,000 Poles, but also thousands, if not tens of thousands of other residents of territories annexed to the USSR, could not be included in the official figure of 786 thousand executed. Taking into account these underestimated victims, the total number of those destroyed with the participation of Beria,

perhaps reaches 150 thousand, and if we add here those who died during the deportation of punished peoples, it certainly exceeds 200 thousand. The number is solid. It is smaller than that of Yezhov, and probably about the same as that of other members of the Politburo at the time. As we shall see later, the decision to execute the Poles at Katyn was collective. It can be assumed that Stalin also forced other decisions on mass executions and deportations to be signed by his colleagues in the Politburo in order to bind everyone with a bloody mutual guarantee.

In general, the "Beria thaw" did not significantly affect the number of prisoners, including political ones. Nevertheless, the release of several thousand members of the party and military elite who survived under Yezhov was reflected in the public consciousness and gave rise to the myth of the mass release of political prisoners from the camps. In fact, a more or less significant number of released political

there were only prisoners from prisons where those who had not yet been sentenced were imprisoned. Stalin, with rare exceptions, did not allow the cancellation of previous judicial and extrajudicial decisions, which explains the limited nature of the "Beria thaw."

Arriving at the Lubyanka, Beria not only freed those whom Yezhov did not have time to shoot. Repressions continued, although with less intensity than under the "iron commissar". While still Yezhov's first deputy, Beria led the case of Marshal V.K. Blucher, accused of participating in a "military fascist conspiracy" and spying for Japan. If Stalin nevertheless decided to arrange a show trial over Yezhov in the future, then Blucher seemed an ideal candidate as one of the defendants: Vasily Konstantinovich could be accused of indiscriminately beating OKDVA cadres, in which the marshal succeeded a lot, naively hoping to ransom his head, over which was in mortal danger after the ineptly fought battles at Hassan, with other people's necks.

Almost immediately after his arrest and even before the first confrontations, Blucher was severely beaten. The marshal, who himself sent Tukhachevsky, Yakir and others to death, understood perfectly well that admitting guilt would still not save him from the death penalty. And the Chekists immediately began to physically treat the arrested person, knowing that he would never voluntarily confess to imaginary crimes under execution articles.

It was no coincidence that Blucher's neighbor in the Lubyanka cell turned out to be the former head of the NKVD Directorate for the Sverdlovsk Region, D.M. Dmitriev (Plotkin) (Dmitry Matveyevich was shot already when Beria was People's Commissar, in March 39th). After his arrest, as part of a gradually begun campaign to gradually replace Yezhov's people with those of Beria, he played the unrespectable role of a "brood hen" and persuaded Martal to confess everything in the illusory hope of saving his own life (conversations in the cell were recorded on a tape recorder). On October 26, Vasily Konstantinovich told Dmitriev:

"Physical impact ... As if nothing hurts, but in fact everything hurts. Yesterday I talked with Beria, obviously, there will be a conversation with the People's Commissar.

- With Yezhov? - Dmitriev asked.

"Yes," Blucher confirmed. And groaned: - Oh, I can not move, the feeling of weakness.

- You shout one more night, and everything will be fine, - either showing participation, or mocking, the Chekist noticed.

On the same day, the duty officer warned Vasily Konstantinovich:

- Get ready to leave, in an hour you will go to Lefortovo.

- Where to start? Blucher asked.

"Comrade Beria told you what is required of you, or you will go to Lefortovo in an hour," the duty officer threatened. - You announced? Yes?

Dmitriev sympathetically explained to Blucher:

- Issue resolved earlier. The decision was when you were arrested. What was it to arrest you? Lots of evidence. Once it was - there is nothing to deny. Now we need to find a mitigating environment. And you make it heavier by going to Lefortovo...

"I wasn't spying," Blucher justified himself, but such childish babble caused only a smile in an experienced Chekist.

Dmitriev knew perfectly well how spies are made from those under investigation, he himself had to deal with this more than once:

- Since people are talking, then there are grounds ...

"I'm not a spy," Blucher argued.

"Don't pretend to be innocent," Dmitriev continued to convince. - You can come and say that I confirm and declare that this is true. Let me tell you everything tomorrow morning. And that's all. If you've made up your mind, now you have to do it all...

"No one recruited me," Vasily Konstantinovich timidly objected.

Such a trifle did not embarrass the former chief of the Sverdlovsk NKVD. He reassured the marshal - the investigator would help:

- How you were recruited, when you were recruited, on what grounds you were recruited. This is the direct install...

"I can now say that I was to blame," Blucher began to hesitate.

- Not guilty, but was in the organization ... - corrected Dmitriev, who knew that the authorities love concreteness.

"I was not part of the organization," Blucher exploded. No, I can't say...

- You better think about what you will say to Beria, so that it is not a windbag ... - Dmitriev bent his line. - Who spoke to you on this subject? Who told you and to whom did you give consent?

Blucher tried to remember something specific:

- This letter is a proposal, I did not answer it. I handed over a copy of the letter to Deribas (head of the NKVD Directorate for the Khabarovsk Territory, who was arrested in the summer of 1937; as you can understand, this is either a letter from someone whom Stalin and Yezhov considered to be part of the never-existing "right-wing Trotskyist bloc" of Bukharin, Yagoda, Rykov, etc., or about a letter from some Japanese representatives - B.S.).

Dmitriev explained:

- Deribas reported... You must say.

- What will I say? - Vasily Konstantinovich turned to his cellmate in despair.

- What an eccentric you are, by God, - Dmitriev smiled sympathetically. - You know (the name of the prisoner in the tape recording was not

deciphered. - B.S.) ... He sat in Butyrki for three months, did not say anything. When they gave him Lefortovo, he immediately said ...

- What will I say? Blucher repeated lostly.

- You listen to me, - ignoring the objections of the interlocutor, the former Chekist confidently continued, - I consider you a Japanese spy, especially since you have such a failure. I'll tell you more, the fact is that you are a spy. What, do you need to go through the Lefortovo prison cell? At least think."

But Vasily Konstantinovich did not want to "think right" and continued to "pretend to be innocent." He was sent to Lefortovo. "Physical impact" at Lubyanka was supposed to seem like health procedures compared to Lefortovo

torture.

I. Rusakovskaya, who was in the same cell with the second wife of Marshal G.P. Kolchugina, told the commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU: "From conversations with Kolchugina-Blyukher it turned out that the reason for her depressed mood was a confrontation with the former Marshal Blyukher, who, according to Kolchugina-Blyukher, was beaten beyond recognition and, being almost insane, in her presence ... uttered monstrous things about himself ... I remember that Kolchugina Blucher spoke with horror about the terrible, torn appearance that Blucher had at the confrontation, threw the phrase: "You understand, he looked as if he had been under tank "".

The former head of the medical unit of the Lefortovo prison, Rosenblum, told the KGB in 1956 that she had provided medical assistance to Blucher under investigation. The face of the unfortunate man was bruised, there was a large bruise under his eye, and the sclera of the eye was filled with blood - the blow was so strong.

The former head of the Lefortovo prison, Zimin, said in 1957 that he himself saw how "Beria beat Blucher, and he not only beat him with his hands, but some special people with rubber truncheons came with him, and they, encouraged by Beria, tortured Blucher, moreover, he shouted loudly: "Stalin, do you hear how they torture me." Beria, in turn, shouted: "Speak how you sold the East."

The same was reported to the Central Committee of the CPSU by the former deputy of Zimin Kharkovets, who claimed that in front of him, Beria, together with Kobulov (obviously, Bogdan, since Amayak was still in Georgia at that time. - B.S.) beat Blucher with rubber truncheons.

On November 12, 1955, one of the former NKVD investigators testified during interrogation that when on November 5 or 6, 1938, he first saw the martal, he "immediately drew attention to the fact that Blucher had been severely beaten the day before, because everything his face was a complete bruise and was swollen. I remember that, looking at Blucher and seeing that his whole face was covered in bruises, Ivanov then told me that, apparently ... Blucher was badly hit.

"Tank" methods of interrogation finally gave the effect. Blyukher confessed to having connections with the "rightists". Between November 6 and 9, he wrote an affidavit that he was preparing a military conspiracy. But he did not have time to confess to espionage in favor of Japan: he died on November 9, 1938, unable to withstand the beatings. The official diagnosis stated death as a result of blockage of the pulmonary artery by a thrombus, formed in

pelvic veins. Was the fatal clot the result of continuous torture, or simply masked another, more frank diagnosis: death from a concussion or a fracture of the skull, for example?

Stalin was informed of Blucher's death. Iosif Vissarionovich ordered the body to be cremated. Former NKVD officer Golovlev told a commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1963: "In our presence, Beria called Stalin, who invited him to come to the Kremlin. Upon his return from Stalin, Beria invited Merkulov, Mironov, Ivanov and me, where he told us that Stalin offered to take Blucher to the Butyrka prison for a medical examination and burn him in a crematorium." The leader did not even use the removal of Yezhov for the posthumous rehabilitation of the marshal, which followed two weeks after his death. Blucher was rehabilitated only in 1956 by a decision of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR "due to the absence of corpus delicti in his actions."

Formally speaking, they tried to tie Blucher to the "military fascist conspiracy" of Tukhachevsky, although Vasily Konstantinovich himself was among the judges who meekly sent Tukhachevsky and his comrades to death. But in fact, the reasons for the repressions against Blucher and Tukhachevsky were fundamentally different.

Preparing for the Second World War, equipping the Red Army with thousands and thousands of tanks and aircraft, in 1937-1938 Stalin carried out a large-scale purge of the highest command personnel from those whose 100% loyalty to himself he doubted. At the same time, he cleared out the civil nomenklatura, sorted out little people. The cleansing was by no means done in case of a possible defeat. Stalin did not think about defeat. They were going to fight "with little bloodshed and on foreign territory." The purge was needed in anticipation of the coming victory. Stalin knew the history of revolutions very well and remembered that Bonapartes are born from victories, not from defeats. The specter of Bonapartism haunted him all his life. It was the fear that one of the victorious marshals would move regiments against the Kremlin that forced Iosif Vissarionovich to inspire the "case of a military-fascist conspiracy" and execute Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Uborevich, Yegorov and hundreds of other army commanders and commanders, commanders and brigade commanders, in whose loyalty at that moment there was no reason to doubt. Only proven "cavalrymen" remained - Voroshilov and Budyonny, Shaposhnikov and Timoshenko, Meretskov and Zhukov, who, as Stalin believed, would not have dangerous ambitions in case of victory. True, about Zhukov, by the end of the war, he seems to have changed this opinion, and soon the victorious 45th sent him to a not very honorable exile. But he didn't destroy it, but still saved it for future battles. As well as Meretskov, who was arrested at the beginning of the war, but soon released.

Blucher was destroyed by Stalin simply because he no longer needed the marshal. Vasily Konstantinovich acted very unsuccessfully during the conflict with the Japanese in the area of Lake Khasan. From the very beginning of the fighting, the commander of the Far Eastern Army did not believe in

the ability of their troops to resist the Japanese. The trouble was that the Red Army soldiers were not very good at fighting. In Voroshilov's order, following the results of the Khasan events, this was said quite frankly: "The culprits for these major shortcomings and for the excessive losses we suffered in a relatively small military clash

are the commanders, commissars and chiefs of all degrees of the Far Eastern Red Banner Front and, first of all, the commander of the Far Eastern Red Banner Front, Marshal Blucher. Instead of honestly giving all his strength to the cause of eliminating sabotage and combat training of the Far Eastern Red Banner Front and truthfully informing the party and the Main Military Council about the shortcomings in the life of the troops of the front, comrade. Blucher systematically, from year to year, covered up his deliberately poor work and inactivity with reports of successes, an increase in the combat training of the front, and its general prosperous state.

Blucher was never able to recapture Zaozernaya Hill from the Japanese before the armistice was concluded. Soviet losses, according to official data published only in 1993, amounted to 792 people killed and 2752 wounded, Japanese - 525 and 913, respectively, that is, 2-3 times less. Voroshilov's order rightly noted: "The combat training of the troops, headquarters and command staff of the front turned out to be at an unacceptably low level. The military units were disorganized and incapacitated; the supply of military units was not organized. , connection)..."

Joseph Vissarionovich did not need such a commander. And Lavrenty Pavlovich exactly followed his instructions. I do not exclude the possibility that he beat Blucher to death not from excessive zeal, but on a secret Stalinist order. It is not for nothing that Blucher's death did not affect Beria's career in any way, while a decade later, the death of one of the executioners under investigation from excessive zeal led to the fall of Minister of State Security V.S. Abakumov. After all, it was not very convenient to try Blucher with an announcement about this in the newspapers. More recently, Vasily Konstantinovich himself actively fought against the enemies of the people and sent the same Tukhachevsky to death, and now he suddenly found himself at the same time with the head of the "military-fascist conspiracy"!

In fact, Stalin destroyed Blucher for Hassan. But it was inconvenient to judge the martial for this. After all, Soviet propaganda declared the Khasan battles a victory for the Red Army. And so everything worked out for the best. Blucher died during the investigation. His arrest was not announced anywhere, as well as his death. Marshal just disappeared.

In the same way, another marshal soon disappeared - A.I. Egorov. He was arrested under Yezhov, on March 27, 1938, and shot already under Beria, on February 23, 1939. Egorov, together with Stalin and Voroshilov, fought in civilian life near Tsaritsyn. Stalin valued Alexander Ilyich for his personal devotion to himself, but as a military specialist he did not place too high, in any case, below Tukhachevsky. But just Yegorov's loyalty to Stalin was called into question, and this decided the fate of the marshal. Back in December 1937, shortly after Yegorov became a deputy of the Supreme Soviet and formally gained parliamentary immunity, denunciations from Efim Afanasyevich Shchadenko and Andrey Vasilyevich Khrulev lay on Voroshilov's table. Two friends agreed that Yegorov

during a friendly dinner (they marked the appointment of Shchadenko as deputy people's commissar of defense, which followed at the end of November), expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the history of the civil war was covered incorrectly, his role, Yegorov, was belittled, and the role of Stalin and Voroshilov

"undeservedly exalted." Apparently, the military leaders drank too much that evening, Alexander Ilyich lost his vigilance, became deeply moved, and that's the result. The time after the Tukhachevsky case and the start of mass arrests in the army was troubling. Shchadenko and Khrulyov might have thought with fright that Yegorov was provoking them in general. And in any case, they decided that it was simply necessary to inform Voroshilov about the "ideologically inconsistent" conversation. Their denunciations turned out to be decisive in the fate of the marttal. Although there were several more denunciations against Yegorov, these first ones were of fundamental importance for Stalin.

And the fact that, during the investigation, Yegorov, as usual, confessed to having connections with the conspirators who had already been shot, and to spying for Germany and Poland, and that he named many colleagues who had not yet been arrested as participants in the conspiracy, imprudently believing Yezhov's promise to save his life, only helped formalize the verdict of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court. Beria was absolutely powerless here, even if he wanted to save Yegorov (and we have no evidence that he really wanted to). Even under Yezhov, Alexander Ilyich managed to say a lot about himself. But the main thing was that Stalin wanted his death, who did not forgive the marshal for his hastily spoken words about the "undeserved exaltation" of Stalin's role in the defense of Tsaritsyn.

Another group of military men was arrested on the very eve of the Great Patriotic War. It all started with the landing of the German Junkers-52 aircraft at the Tushino airfield on May 15, 1941. After that, on the very eve of the war and in its first days, several generals associated with aviation and air defense were arrested, including the head of the air defense department G.M. Stern, head of the Red Army Air Force P.V. Rychagov, Commander of the Baltic Military District A.D. Loktionov, who previously held the post of head of the Red Army Air Force, assistant chief of the General Staff for Aviation Ya.V. Smushkevich, as well as the former Chief of the General Staff K.A. Meretskov and People's Commissar for Armaments B.L. Vannikov. Strictly speaking, Beria had nothing to do with these arrests. The fight against spies and conspirators, mostly imaginary, was then already engaged in the People's Commissariat of State Security, headed by V.N. Merkulov. In addition to the incident with the Junkers, there were some other sins behind the arrested generals. So, for example, Stern hid his social origin, about which, after Khalkhin Gol, for which he was awarded the Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union, he wrote a penitential letter to Voroshilov. True, from this letter it is impossible to understand who the parents of Grigory Mikhailovich were after all. In the questionnaires, he wrote that his father was a doctor. It can be assumed that in reality he turned out to be some kind of merchant of the 2nd guild.

There were denunciations against Stern, Rychagov and others. No wonder. In the NKVD, and then in the NKGB, they collected material on almost all the generals, so that, if there was a sanction from Stalin, they would give it a go. So, the captain of state security (which corresponded to an army colonel) Tikhon Vasilyevich Pronin in a letter to the secretary of the Central Committee and member of the GKO G.M. Malenkov of April 3, 1942 admitted: "In a letter

Comrade Stalin on May 29, 1941, I described in detail the criminal activities of the former leaders of the Party and the State

Air Force of the Red Army - Rychagova, Smushkevich, Pumpur, etc. "Surely similar denunciations were on Stern, Meretskoy and others, especially after it became known about the incident with the Junkers and the removal of Stern and Rychagov from their posts. But the real reason for the repressions against the aviator generals was their failure with the German aircraft.

Although, in fairness, we must admit that they could do little. Soviet air defense remained very weak until the early 60s, when anti-aircraft missile systems and radars were adopted. Prior to this, there were not enough air observation posts, and anti-aircraft guns (during the war years they were received under Lend-Lease from America), and interceptor fighters, and experienced pilots. For example, in 1953, shortly after Stalin's death, a large group of American aircraft violated the western borders of the USSR at high altitude, and our air defense could not do anything with them.

Vannikov and Meretskoy were lucky. After spending several months in prison and forcing them to confess to conspiracy and espionage in favor of Germany, Kirill Afanasyevich and Boris Lvovich were released and reinstated in the ranks of generals. Others were less fortunate. At the suggestion of Beria, Stalin authorized the execution of G.M. Stern, P.V. Rychagova, A.D. Loktionova, Ya.V. Smushkevich and others arrested in the "case of aviators". This idea, as before, in the case of Polish officers, Lavrenty Pavlovich wrote at the direction of Stalin. The generals were shot in Kuibyshev on October 28, 1941 on false accusations that they were conspirators and German agents. During the investigation, all of them could not stand the beatings and repented of the crimes they did not commit. Then the unfortunate confessions beaten out of them with fists and rubber truncheons refused, but this did not save them.

The fact that Beria, against his will, wrote an idea about the execution of aviator generals is indirectly recognized by the former chief military prosecutor of the USSR A.F. Katusev, who, based on a study of the Politburo archives, made the following conclusion: "On the basis of many examples, it was possible to establish that not one of the leaders of the party and the old Bolsheviks was arrested without the personal instructions of Stalin, who jealously ensured that Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria did not exceed their powers. In this sense, such a fact as the execution of 161 political prisoners, including Christian Rakovsky, Maria Spiridonova, Valentin Arnold, Pyotr Petrovsky, Olga Kameneva and others, on September 8, 1941 in the Oryol prison, is indicative. Beria: And what actually turned out?

In April 1990, the Main Military Prosecutor's Office completed an investigation, during which it was found that the application of capital punishment to 170 prisoners sentenced to imprisonment at different times for counter-revolutionary crimes was prescribed by a decree of September 6, 1941 No. 634 ss, signed by Stalin as Chairman of the State Defense Committee. True, Beria was involved in this - he sent a letter to Stalin with a list of 170 names and the conclusion: "The NKVD of the USSR considers it necessary to apply capital punishment to them

punishment ... "But, knowing the habits of Stalin, it cannot be ruled out that this letter from Beria appeared on the initiative of the" Boss "".

It was exactly the same in the case of the Poles executed at Katyn, with the aviator generals and many others who were condemned according to the NKVD representations signed by Beria. However, it is difficult to doubt that these performances were written at the request of Stalin.

On July 20, 1941, Vannikov, who fortunately escaped death, was even given a special "safeguard certificate" signed by Stalin: "The State Defense Committee certifies that Comrade Vannikov Boris Lvovich was temporarily arrested by the NKGB, as it has now been clarified, due to a misunderstanding and that Comrade Vannikov BL is now considered to be fully rehabilitated.

Tov. Vannikov B.L. By a decree of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, he was appointed Deputy People's Commissar for Armaments, and by order of the State Defense Committee, he must immediately begin work as Deputy People's Commissar for Armaments.

Vannikov after the release of Beria brought closer to him. They knew each other from the Baku underground. In addition, Lavrenty Pavlovich, in all likelihood, was aware of some facts that compromised Boris Lvovich in terms of social origin, and therefore could not be afraid of intrigues on his part. Already after the arrest of Beria Vannikov, the connection with Lavrenty Pavlovich, as well as some Baku affairs, were tried to be blamed by some "well-wishers". This is evidenced by the document published by me in the appendix. However, everything ended happily for Boris Lvovich. He lived to an honorary burial in the Kremlin wall.

Among the victims of illegal repression under Beria there were many prominent people - director V.E. Meyerhold, journalist M.E. Koltsov, writer I.E. Babel and others. Major party leaders were also shot - R.I. Eikhe, S.V. Kosior, V.Ya. Chubar, A.V. Kosarev and others (some of them were arrested under Yezhov). In fairness, it should be said that figures of this level were repressed at the initiative of Stalin, and not Yezhov or Beria. The NKVD, on behalf of Joseph Vissarionovich, only fabricated material against those he pointed to. Babel, Koltsov and Meyerhold, in particular, were involved in the fake case of Yezhov's "terrorist conspiracy" against Stalin. Only now they were not satisfied with open political trials. It was believed that the "enemies of the people" were already finished. Therefore, new "enemies" were shot quietly, even without publication in the press.

The same illegal methods of investigation were used against the newly arrested, which the Central Committee formally condemned in November 1938. In May 39, the old Bolshevik M.S. was arrested. Kedrov, uncle of the former head of the Foreign Department of the NKVD Artuzov, who was shot in 1937. Mikhail Sergeevich was accused of espionage, cooperation with the security department and sabotage during the civil war. Kedrov unsuccessfully appealed to the Central Committee, insisting on his innocence. On August 19, 1939, he wrote, not knowing that his letters would not go further than the Investigative Department of the NKVD: "From the gloomy cell of the Lefortovo prison I appeal to you for help. Hear a cry of horror, do not pass by, intercede, help

destroy the nightmare of interrogation, uncover the error.

I suffer innocently. Believe me. Time will show. I am not an agent provocateur of the tsarist secret police, not a spy, not a member of an anti-Soviet organization ... For the fifth month, I have been asking in vain at each interrogation to bring specific charges against me so that I can refute them, in vain I have asked the investigators to write down facts from my life that refute the above charges. In vain...

And from the very first days of my stay in the harsh Sukhanov prison, repressions began: limiting my sleep time to 1-2 hours a day, depriving me of statements of products, books, walks, even refusing medical care and medicines, despite my serious heart disease.

With my transfer to the Lefortovo prison, the circle of repressions expanded. I was forced to stand for hours until I was exhausted, in silence in the investigators' offices, they put me face-down in a corner like a schoolboy, shook me by the collar. They grabbed him by the beard, twice put him in a punishment cell, or rather, a cellar. A completely damp and cold room with a walled-up window. Since the beginning of August, investigators gr. gr. Meshik, Adamov, Albogachiev started beating me. During three interrogations, I was beaten on the cheeks because I declare that I am an honest Bolshevik and that they do not and cannot have any facts of my criminal work.

Kedrov was also lucky that he was not beaten with rubber truncheons. But Meyerhold was not lucky. The world-famous director in letters to Beria, Molotov and the prosecutor's office told in detail how he was beaten. Prosecutor A.Ya. Vyshinsky, Vsevolod Emilievich, described in detail how the tortures took place: "They laid me on the floor face down, beat me with a rubber tourniquet on my heels and on my back; when I sat on a chair, they beat me with the same rubber on my legs (from above, with great force) and in places from my knees to the upper parts of the legs; when these places of the legs were filled with profuse internal hemorrhage, then these red-blue-yellow bruises were again beaten with this tourniquet, and the pain was such that it seemed that boiling water was poured onto the painful sensitive places of the legs (I shouted and cried in pain.) They hit me in the face with their hands." Alexander Yanuarievich, like Lavrenty Pavlovich, was difficult to surprise with such. At the trial, which took place on February 1, 1940, Meyerhold claimed that he "lied to himself only because they beat me with a rubber stick. I then decided to lie and go to the fire." Did not help. The military collegium stamped the death sentence issued from the Politburo, and the next day it was carried out. The Master was gone (as students and friends called Meyerhold). The one who wrote in one of his dying statements: "I want my daughter and my friends to know someday that I remained an honest communist to the end" is gone.

Lavrenty Pavlovich had to send to the stake not hundreds of thousands, as under Yezhov, but many thousands of innocent people. Beria did good, by no means breaking with evil. Yes, and it would be strange to expect to see in a Bolshevik with more than 20 years of experience and a career Chekist a supporter of the rule of law. Although, as we remember, in his memorandums he sometimes flaunted this term for a red word. Since then, little has changed. Beatings are not worse than those that Meyerhold had to experience, and today they are practiced by our police, although Russia seems to be considered a democratic country.

By the time Beria arrived, the NKVD was not only a punitive, but also a powerful economic mechanism. Prisoners of the Gulag worked at numerous construction sites. In 1940, the NKVD completed 13% of all capital work in the country's national economy. In 1941, the organizations of the People's Commissariat were to master capital investments worth 6.8 billion rubles and produce industrial products worth 1.8 billion rubles. These "huge plans" were to be realized thanks to the forced labor of almost two million prisoners.

BEFORE THE WAR

Even before the start of the Great Patriotic War, Lavrenty Pavlovich had to deal with purely military issues. So, on November 29, 1939, on the very eve of the Soviet attack on Finland that followed the next morning, he sent a very alarming letter to People's Commissar of Defense Marshal Voroshilov. So far, only a fragment of this letter, dedicated to the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, has been published, but it can be assumed that other parts of the letter concerned the state of the ground forces and the Air Force and did not paint the situation in the best light. The passage on the Baltic Fleet is worth quoting in full: "There are a number of shortcomings in the combat training of the KBF. There is disorganization and excessive fuss in the work of the headquarters, there is no proper operational interaction between the departments of the fleet headquarters. the number of options, and none of them was deeply thought out. The task of the landing operation assigned to the special-purpose rifle brigade changed three times. help to carry out this work, a large number of fleet commanders, teachers of the academy and even commandants of transports were involved. There are many telephone and oral conversations around the operation. The room where all operational documents and developments are concentrated is visited by many outsiders.

The command of the Kronstadt fortified region has already informed the commanders and commissars of divisions about the plans for their deployment on the islands in the Gulf of Finland.

All this led to the fact that not only almost the entire command staff of the fleet knows about the upcoming operation, but rumors about them (operations. - B.S.) even penetrated among the civilian population.

The intelligence department of the fleet headquarters is not working well.

The preparation of transports for a landing operation takes place without sufficient guidance from the fleet headquarters and without the supervision of experienced specialists. Transports are equipped extremely slowly and, moreover, with great alterations. The manufactured ladders for lowering the transported heavy material part turned out to be unusable and had to be redone.

Disorganization in work is also observed in some headquarters of fleet formations. The squadron chief of staff, captain 1st rank Chelpanov, reporting to the fleet commander on the readiness of artillery,

did not even know the exact data on the number and brands of shells needed for the new destroyers.

The artillery preparation of the fleet is not up to the mark. The cruiser "Kirov" did not perform any of the test firing from the main caliber. The new destroyers and leaders of test firing did not complete, and the old destroyers, which will carry out amphibious missions in the upcoming operation, did not undergo fire training during the entire summer campaign and were used only as support ships.

The personnel, including the commanders of combat units, are poorly aware of the new materiel of artillery. The K-34 76 mm guns and DK heavy machine guns installed on the new ships have not yet been tested.

On the Jacobin, when checking the knowledge of the materiel, it turned out that the personnel could not even load the K 21 gun on their own. Some ships and coastal units do not have firing tables. Fort "Krasnoflotsky", which is entrusted with very responsible tasks, received tables of ultra-long firing for a 12-inch caliber only on November 16th.

Not all ships have trained machine guns. The patrol ship "Whirlwind", having received a responsible task, left with unfinished machine guns and only 30% provided with life belts. On the patrol ship "Purga", the compressor failed, and in connection with this, the torpedo tubes also failed, which reduced the combat capability of the ship by 50%.

Beria was well aware that the troops were not ready to invade Finland. Lavrenty Pavlovich did not bear any responsibility for preparing the army and navy for war. Therefore, he could afford very frank criticism. Beria was well aware that these and other shortcomings could not be corrected in the day remaining before the start of hostilities. If the staffs do not know how to properly plan the operation, and the gunners how to load guns, if there are no tables for shooting and machine guns are not sighted, if reconnaissance works poorly, and preparations for the offensive cannot be kept secret, then the troops that will have to cross the Finnish border tomorrow, will suffer serious setbacks and will not be able to achieve a quick victory. It seems that the head of the NKVD wrote a letter to Voroshilov with an eye to the future, so that later, when they were looking for those responsible for the inevitable military failures, he would demonstrate to Stalin his perspicacity: look, I warned that we were not ready for war. But the wise Lavrenty Pavlovich also understood very well that Stalin would not revise the decision to attack Finland that had already been made. And he ended the letter to Voroshilov on an optimistic note: "The mood of the personnel of the Baltic Fleet in connection with the upcoming operation is combative. The Red Navy and command personnel express their readiness at any moment to fulfill the order of the government and stand up for the defense of the Soviet Union."

During the Great Patriotic War, the role of the NKVD in the economy increased even more. In 1941-1944, Beria's department accounted for almost 15% of all capital construction. Zeks built 612 field and 230 permanent airfields, aircraft factories in the area

Kuibyshev, aircraft plant in Omsk, 3 blast furnaces with annual capacity

almost 1 million tons of pig iron, 16 open-hearth and electric furnaces, which produced up to half a million tons of steel per year, rolling mills for 542 thousand tons of steel, dozens of mines and cuts were put into operation, where up to 7 million tons of coal were mined per year (the same convicts cut coal), 10 compressor stations for the oil industry, a plant for nitroglycerin gunpowder, and much, much more. At the enterprises of the NKVD during the same period, 315 tons of gold, 9 million tons of coal, 6 million tons of blister copper, 407 thousand tons of oil, 1 million tons of chrome ore were mined, 30 million mines were produced, 90 million cubic meters were produced. . m of wood and firewood. Stalin was pleased with the successes of the NKVD on the economic front, and this was one of the main reasons for the transfer of Beria shortly after the end of the war to economic work. What Lavrenty Pavlovich dreamed about back in the early 20s came true. But Lavrenty Pavlovich had to supervise a very specific industry - the development and production of atomic and hydrogen bombs. For the construction of nuclear facilities, it was planned to widely use the Gulag, and to speed up scientific and technical developments, to get American and British atomic secrets with the help of intelligence. Beria had experience in both, and even some kind of technical education. Therefore, the choice fell on him.

The fact that Lavrenty Pavlovich created a network of research institutions in the Gulag system - the so-called "tparashki" - where scientists prisoners worked on defense projects, also played a role. Often they were arrested only in order to be put to work in the "parashka" on topics of interest to the military and punitive departments. There worked, in particular, the famous designers A.N. Tupolev and S.P. Korolev. Lavrenty Pavlovich replied with cheerful cynicism to one of the employees of the "tparashka", the Italian aircraft designer Count Robert Oros di Bartini, who imprudently came to the USSR in the 1920s to build socialism, and now he was proving that he was not guilty of anything, with cheerful cynicism: "Of course, I know, that you are not to blame. If you were guilty, you would have been shot. And so: the plane - into the air, and you - the Stalin Prize and freedom. "

In August 1940, Beria presented Stalin with a great gift - he organized the murder of his worst enemy Trotsky. And strictly speaking, Lavrenty Pavlovich had nothing to do with the major failure of Soviet intelligence, which failed to find out about the plan of the German attack on the USSR. Since January 1941, intelligence was transferred to the new People's Commissariat of State Security of the USSR, headed by V.N. Merkulov. Although he was a protege of Lavrenty Pavlovich, he did not have enough stars from the sky. Then, on January 30, 1941, Beria was awarded the title of General Commissar of State Security, equivalent to a marshal's rank in the army, and on February 41, he became Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, in charge of security agencies and the military industry.

On March 5, 1940, the Politburo decided to execute captured Polish officers and interned civilians of Polish nationality from among the intelligentsia and the propertied classes - almost 22 thousand people, including more than 14.5 thousand officers. In April and the first half of May, it was carried out by the NKVD. According to Sergo Beria, his father opposed the execution of the Poles at a meeting of the Politburo: "He explained his position as follows:" War is inevitable.

The Polish officer corps is a potential ally in the fight against Hitler. One way or another, we will enter Poland, and, of course, the Polish army should be on our side in a future war. "It is not difficult to imagine the reaction of the party elite - the father almost lost his position for obstinacy ... But this did not make the father sign the death warrant by the Polish officers."

There is no signature of Beria on the decision to execute the Poles - he was only a candidate member of the Politburo and did not have the right to a decisive vote. The proposal of the NKVD on the execution of the Poles by Lavrenty Pavlovich was signed. However, such a proposal was probably drawn up retroactively, after the political leadership had made a decision in principle. It is impossible to imagine that Beria persuaded Stalin: "Joseph, let's shoot these damned Poles!" And Stalin would have denied: "No, Lavrenty, it's not time yet." The question was political, and it was Stalin who decided it, not Beria. The initiative in such a case could cost the head of the NKVD his life. Yezhov's example was before my eyes. In addition, back in February 1940, he proposed by the decision of the Special Meeting to send captured Polish officers to camps in the eastern part of the USSR for a period of 8 years.

The resolution dated March 5, 1940 bears the signatures of members of the Politburo, but there is one notable correction: as part of the troika, which was supposed to stamp the death sentences on the Poles, the name of Beria, which was originally in the typewritten text, was crossed out and the name of B.Z. was entered in ink. Kobulov. This can be regarded as evidence that the proposal signed by the head of the NKVD was not drawn up by him even after the Politburo made a fundamental decision. It is likely that this decision was first made by the leading four of Stalin, Voroshilov, Molotov and Mikoyan, whose signatures are on the document. Kalinin and Kaganovich, who were absent, were later interviewed by telephone, and they also spoke in favor. Lavrenty Pavlovich himself would not propose himself to the troika, so that later he himself would be deleted. Most likely, the text of the proposal to apply capital punishment to the Poles was printed not by Beria's employees, but by Stalin's secretary A.N. Poskrebyshchev. I think that Beria was really against the execution of the Poles and could ask Stalin to have his name crossed out from among those on whose behalf the death sentences would be formally pronounced. Taking into account the relative liberalism of Beria when he was at the head of the Georgian GPU and his post-war position regarding the unification of Germany into a single bourgeois-democratic state, Sergo's story about his father's objections to the execution of the Poles seems quite plausible.

What reason forced Stalin to suddenly abandon the plan to deport Polish officers to Siberia and the Far East and give preference to the "hard option" - their speedy destruction? Judging by a number of signs, Joseph Vissarionovich planned to attack Germany in the summer of 1940. In this case, England and the Polish government in exile, located in London, became allies of the USSR. The Polish officers would have to be released from the camps and handed over to the Polish government in London to form a new Polish army. However

the vast majority of these officers had no sympathy for either

Soviet Union, nor to communism. An army under their command would have been loyal to the London government, not to Stalin. Stalin, on the other hand, needed an obedient Poland under the control of a communist government completely dependent on the USSR. Therefore, he decided to secretly execute the captured officers.

Already on February 27, 1940, in the directives to the Red Army and Navy, Germany and its allies were named as the only likely enemy. But these days the Soviet-Finnish war was still going on, and England and France were seriously considering sending a large expeditionary force to help the Finns. However, not them, but Germany, Stalin considered his main opponent. And it is no coincidence that a week after the decision of the Politburo, peace was concluded with Finland, and the liberated troops were rapidly transferred to the western borders. The term for the demobilization of those called up from the reserve for the war with Finland was postponed until July 1, 1940. The NKVD managed to shoot almost all the Poles by the time the big German offensive in the West began on May 10, 1940. Stalin expected that the Wehrmacht would get bogged down on the Maginot Line, and then, after one and a half to two months of active hostilities on the German-French front, the Red Army would hit the Germans in the rear, covered only by a dozen secondary divisions. However, France finally collapsed already in mid-June, and the outcome of the campaign itself did not cause much doubt already at the end of May. Under these conditions, Stalin did not dare to launch an offensive, deciding to better prepare for a war with such a formidable enemy.

It is characteristic that Stalin, ruthlessly cracking down on Polish officers and intelligentsia, did so in deep secrecy, and publicly sought to demonstrate to foreign observers respect for Polish culture and concern for the Polish national minority in the USSR. Therefore, on July 3, 1940, a formidable Stalinist cipher message went to the Lvov Regional Committee of the CP (b) of Ukraine, its head Grischuk, as well as Khrushchev and Burmistenko: "The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks received information that the authorities in Lvov allow excesses against the Polish population, do not provide assistance to Polish refugees, hamper the Polish language, do not hire Poles for work, as a result of which the Poles are forced to impersonate Ukrainians, etc. The police are especially misbehaving. such excesses and take measures to establish fraternal relations between the Ukrainian and Polish working people. I advise you to convene a small meeting of the best Polish people, learn from them about complaints of excesses, write down these complaints and then take them into account when developing measures to improve relations with the Poles.

In all likelihood, Khrushchev's hair stood on end when he read these lines. Well, just now "the best Polish people were shot" near Kharkov, in Katyn and Medny, and then all of a sudden, if you please, establish relations with them, convene some kind of meeting there. True, this meeting, as the experienced Nikita Sergeevich probably immediately understood, was "for furniture" - so that it could be printed in newspapers.

It is striking that, emphasizing in the encryption on the "wrong" behavior of the police, Stalin addressed it not to Beria, to whom

militiamen were directly subordinated, but only to party leaders. It is possible that Lavrenty Pavlovich himself put

Iosif Vissarionovich to the knowledge of the "excesses" against the Poles in the western regions of Ukraine. In addition, Stalin understood that in the localities the NKVD bodies follow, first of all, the directives of the local party leaders, if, of course, they do not contradict the instructions of Moscow and the central apparatus of the NKVD. And the Poles in the 20s and in the 30s were considered, if not without exception, enemies, a nation, of course, suspicious, among which there are a lot of spies, saboteurs and potential defectors. So in Lvov, the internal affairs authorities took up the persecution of the Poles with great enthusiasm, and it took a shout from Stalin to moderate their zeal.

If, in this case, Stalin's anger fell upon Khrushchev at Beria's tip, or if Khrushchev came to just such a conclusion, then this was another reason for Nikita Sergeevich to harbor a grudge against the head of the NKVD.

Back in mid-October 1940, Stalin instructed Beria to find among the surviving Polish prisoners of war those who would express their readiness to fight Hitler in alliance with the USSR, even without the sanction of the Polish government in London. Then he instructed Lavrenty Pavlovich to take measures to create formations in the USSR from Czechs and Slovaks, led by Colonel Ludwig Svoboda. Already on November 2, 1940, Beria reported that he had managed to select a group of "correctly politically minded" officers who saw the future Poland as closely connected "in one form or another with the Soviet Union." The "trustworthy" Poles were asked to "give the opportunity to talk in a secret form with their like-minded people in the Poles' prisoner of war camps and select the personnel of the future division." Beria recommended starting to form such a division "in one of the state farms in the south-east of the USSR", in Kazakhstan.

On June 4, 1941, the Politburo decided to form the 238th Rifle Division of the Red Army by July 1, "staffed with personnel of Polish nationality and persons who know the Polish language, serving in the Red Army." The formation of the division was prevented by the war that began at the wrong time.

Stalin could need a Polish division for only one purpose - the war against Germany. There was no point in creating such a division ahead of time. There was more trouble with it than with the usual division of the Red Army - special regulations in Polish and a Polish military uniform were needed. In terms of combat effectiveness, it would be worse than most Soviet divisions. After all, before the "winter war" the Finnish corps of the Red Army was formed in the same way, but there was little sense from it. The "Red Finns" fought very badly, often turned to flight, and their use on the front line had to be abandoned. There was no reason to think that the "Red Poles", who often had only Polish surnames, would fight better. Stalin needed the Polish division not for fighting, but for the parade in Warsaw, liberated from the Germans. It would become the backbone of the pro-Soviet government of Poland. This role in the 45th year was really played by the two armies formed in the USSR.

Polsky, but in 1941, after the first failures of the Red Army, the question of forming a Polish division was immediately dropped.

Further steps have been taken to organize

sabotage groups from among the soldiers and officers of the Czechoslovak Legion Ludwig Svoboda. At the end of April 1941, a mission of the Czechoslovak government in exile arrived in Moscow, headed by Colonel G. Pika. As reported in the memoirs of Svoboda, an agreement was reached on the preparation of paratroopers, sabotage actions and the collection of intelligence information, and "those who were supposed to provide" movement "on illegal routes from their homeland arrived at the appointed place ... in five or six days before the start of Hitler's aggression against the USSR. In the same way, a few days before the start of the invasion, the Germans sent saboteurs and intelligence officers from among the local natives into the USSR.

The Soviet invasion of Germany was originally scheduled for June 1941. It is curious that Stalin was firmly convinced that Germany in 1941 was not going to attack the USSR, and Hitler, in turn, did not expect the start of the Soviet offensive before 1943. The German headquarters did not know that in the March plan for the strategic deployment of the Red Army in the West, Deputy Chief of the General Staff N.F. Vatutin left a resolution: "Offensive to begin 12.6". In mid-May, a plan for a preventive strike was finally developed. The offensive was supposed to be carried out in the southwestern direction in the direction of Katowice - Katowice, where 152 Soviet divisions, according to the plan of Timoshenko and Zhukov, were to defeat 100 German and inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy already on the 30th day of the operation. Then the Soviet troops were to turn north and, reaching the Baltic, encircle all German forces in Poland and East Prussia. Then the way to Western Europe would be open.

The Red Army in the West had 3.5 times as many tanks and 5.5 times as many combat aircraft. True, the quality of personnel training negated this superiority in reality, but neither the Soviet generals nor Stalin then realized this sad circumstance. There was another circumstance unpleasant for the Soviet leadership. The main grouping of the Wehrmacht was not in the south-west, as the General Staff of the Red Army assumed, but in the center, and the blow of 152 Soviet divisions would have hit not 100, but only 30 German divisions. In this case, the Soviet shock grouping would have undergone a powerful counterattack on the flank, which would have been delivered by the forces of the most powerful German Army Group Center. The low level of training of Soviet pilots and tank crews, an acute shortage of communications equipment, and weak interaction between different types of troops guaranteed that even if the Red Army had preempted the Wehrmacht and struck first, the background would still have suffered a heavy defeat.

The German plan "Barbarossa", which provided for an offensive in all three strategic directions, was largely insured against intelligence errors in determining the deployment of Soviet troops. If, say, the main grouping of the Red Army were located not in the southwestern, but in the central direction, this circumstance would slow down the advance of the Army Group "Center", but on the other hand, the Army Group "South" would advance in a much higher

pace than it actually happened. And then Stalin, perhaps, would have shot not Pavlov, but Kirponos. That's the whole difference.

Already in mid-May 1941, when the plan for a preventive strike was finally ready, it became clear that due to the fact that there had not yet been

the concentration of troops has been completed, it will not be possible to launch an offensive on June 12, as originally planned. Therefore, as shown by the timing of the redeployment of troops and the completion of the formation of the Polish division, the invasion of Western Europe was postponed to July. At the same time, the exact start date of the operation, in all likelihood, was never established, since it depended on the completion date for the concentration of forces and means. It can be assumed that, as before the attack on Finland, Stalin did not intend to record the exact day of the start of the offensive in any document, but wanted to give the appropriate order orally, by telephone.

As the then People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov, in his book of memoirs "On the Eve", published in 1966, "JV Stalin imagined the combat readiness of our Armed Forces to be higher than it actually was. Knowing exactly the number of the latest aircraft deployed on his orders at border airfields, he believed that at any moment, on a combat alarm signal, they could take off into the air and give a reliable rebuff to the enemy. And he was simply stunned by the news that our planes did not have time to take off into the air, but died right at the airfields "and Therefore, the Soviet leader fearlessly prepared to rush into the abyss of war with the strongest army in Europe at that moment. Even in a nightmare, Yemu could not foresee that he would have to retreat to Moscow and Stalingrad.

Nikolai Gerasimov has not one more significant saying in his posthumously published book Sharp Turns. Kuznetsov mentions that Zhukov, after his appointment in February 1941 as chief of the General Staff, but even before the start of World War II, showed a "cool attitude towards the fleet", since "at that time the fleet was still relatively small in composition (until it was implemented" a large program") did not arouse much interest in Stalin in case of an imminent war, and Zhukov apparently heard and knew this. This means that Joseph Vissarionovich already in February 41 was thinking about an imminent war, but he was not preparing to repel a German attack.

Beria, unlike Stalin, as we have already seen in the example of the Finnish war, was very skeptical about the combat effectiveness of the Soviet armed forces. He was aware of Soviet plans to attack Germany. As early as May 6, 1940, during a dinner in a narrow circle of guards in the presence of Beria, Stalin declared: "We will not fight with America ... We will fight with Germany! England and America will be our allies!" I think Lavrenty Pavlovich expressed serious doubts to Stalin that the Soviet blitzkrieg against Germany would end in success, and in reality it would be necessary to wage a difficult protracted war. Perhaps it was precisely because of this skepticism that during the reorganization of the state security agencies in early February 1941, the Directorate of Special Departments, which was engaged in operational-Chehist and counterintelligence work in the Red Army, was transferred from the NKVD to the People's Commissariat of Defense. Stalin was preparing to become Supreme Commander-in-Chief in order to lead the short and victorious, as he thought, a campaign in Western Europe. For this time

Iosif Vissarionovich was going to take the Red Army and the security agencies working there under close personal control in order to guarantee himself from the slightest Bonapartist manifestations. Dai to leave in the hands of Beria or his protege Merkulov special departments, the importance of which increased enormously in the conditions of a victorious war, Stalin did not want. He must have been afraid then.

give too much power to a young and ambitious people's commissar who has proven himself to be a man of action and a good administrator.

The war with Germany in the first two years turned out for the Red Army not in victories, but for the most part in heavy defeats. During this period, the emergence of a new Bonaparte could not be feared. The life-and-death struggle against Germany demanded the concentration of all punitive counterintelligence agencies in one hand. After all, the success of the struggle to a decisive extent depended on the strength of both the front and the rear, and it was necessary to unite the actions of the Chekists in the army and among the civilian population. When in the spring of 1943, after Stalingrad, the outcome of the war had already been decided, Iosif Vissarionovich returned to the scheme of the first half of 1941 and returned the special departments, renamed the military counterintelligence "SMERSH" ("Death to Spies"), to the People's Commissariat of Defense, which itself and led. At the head of the Directorate of Special Departments, and then Smersh, was V.S. Abakumov, that for the time being Stalin was quite satisfied. Viktor Semenovitch advanced under Beria thanks to elementary toadying. When Lavrenty Pavlovich, shortly after his appointment to the post of People's Commissar, spoke at a meeting of employees of the central apparatus, Abakumov fussed and installed a portrait of the new chief Beria on the stage, noticed the efficient Chekist and appointed him head of the UNKVD of the Rostov Region. Later, Abakumov became Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, and in July 1941 he headed the Office of Special Departments. In the future, he was brought closer by Stalin and after the war became Beria's rival in the struggle for control over the state security agencies.

GREAT PATRIOTIC: AT THE FRONT, AT LUBYANKA, IN THE URALS

A month after the start of the war, on July 20, 1941, the NKGB was again merged with the NKVD, headed by Beria. He was also appointed a member of the State Defense Committee, and from May 16, 1944 he became deputy chairman of the State Defense Committee. Lavrenty Pavlovich oversaw the defense industry in this capacity. On September 30, 1943, for success in the production of weapons and ammunition, he was awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labor. It must be admitted that the energy of Lavrenty Pavlovich contributed a lot to the fact that the Red Army had an abundance of tanks and aircraft, mines and shells. Although here, too, there were some additions, and there is reason to suspect that, on paper, the production of certain types of weapons could be overestimated by one and a half to two times.

In the first months of the war, Lavrenty Pavlovich also had to engage in diplomacy, which 22 years later, during the investigation, he was blamed, accused of nothing more and less than an attempt

collusion with Hitler. How was it really? On August 7, 1953, the former head of the operation to assassinate Trotsky P.A. Sudoplatov wrote from prison to the Council of Ministers of the USSR:

"... Around June 25-27, 1941, I was summoned to the office of the then People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR Beria.

Beria told me that there was a decision of the Soviet government, according to which it was necessary to unofficially find out under what conditions Germany would agree to end the war against the USSR and suspend the offensive of the Nazi troops. Beria explained to me that this decision of the Soviet government was intended to create conditions that would allow the Soviet government to maneuver and buy time to gather forces. In this regard, Beria ordered me to meet with the Bulgarian ambassador to the USSR Stamenov, who, according to the information of the NKVD of the USSR, had connections with the Germans and was well known to them.

Beria ordered me to put four questions in a conversation with Stamenov. Beria listed these questions, looking in his notebook, and they boiled down to the following:

why Germany, violating the non-aggression pact, started a war against the USSR;

what would suit Germany, on what conditions Germany agrees to end the war, what is needed to end the war;

will the Germans be satisfied with the transfer of such Soviet lands to Germany as the Baltic states, Ukraine, Bessarabia, Bukovina, the Karelian Isthmus;

if not, what territories does Germany additionally claim.

Beria ordered me not to conduct a conversation with Stamenov on behalf of the Soviet government, but to raise these questions in the course of a conversation on the topic of the military and political situation that had arisen and also to find out Stamenov's opinion on the substance of these four questions ...

Beria ... sternly warned me that I must never, anywhere, ever tell anyone about this order from the Soviet government, otherwise I and my family would be destroyed. Beria instructed to follow through the decryption service in what form Stamenov would send a message on these issues abroad.

Well, I had an agreement with Stamenov that allowed me to call him to a meeting. The next day, in accordance with the instructions received from Beria, I called the Bulgarian embassy, asked Stamenov to the office and arranged a meeting with him at the Tchaikovsky Hall on Mayakovsky Square. Having met Stamenov, I invited him into the car and took him to the Aragvi restaurant.

In "Aragvi", as was provided by Beria's instructions, I had a conversation with Stamenov. The conversation began on the merits of the military and political situation that had been created by that time. I asked Stamenov about the attitude of the Bulgarians to the German invasion of the USSR, about the possible position of France, England and the United States in this regard, during the conversation, when we touched on the topic of the treacherous violation of the non-aggression pact by the Germans ... I put before Stamenov the above four questions.

Everything I said, Stamenov listened attentively, but did not express his opinion on these four issues. Stamenov tried

behave like a man convinced of the defeat of Germany in this war. He did not attach much importance to the rapid advance of the Germans in the first days of the war. His main statements boiled down to the fact that the forces of the USSR undoubtedly surpass the forces of Germany and that even if the Germans occupy at first significant territories of the USSR and, perhaps, even reach the Volga, Germany will still be defeated and defeated in the future.

After the meeting with Stamenov, I immediately, on the same evening, reported on its results to the then People's Commissar Beria in his office in the building of the NKVD of the USSR. During my report, Beria made some notes in his notebook, then called a car in front of me and, having told the duty officer that he was going to the Central Committee, he left.

I didn't talk to Stamenov anymore on the topics raised in the four questions, and in general I didn't meet with him anymore. For some time, surveillance of Stamenov's ciphered correspondence continued. It didn't give any results. However, this does not exclude that Stamenov could have reported this conversation through diplomatic mail or diplomatic communications of those embassies and missions whose countries had not yet participated in the war by that time.

I did not receive any more instructions related to this case or the use of Stamenov. Whether Beria personally met with Stamenov, I do not know. I was not entrusted with the organization of such a meeting."

Today we also cannot say with certainty whether the meeting between Sudoplatov and Stamenov had any consequences. In his memoirs, Sudoplatov claimed that the Bulgarian ambassador was a recruited agent of the NKVD, but the 1953 letter quoted above casts doubt on this. After all, there Pavel Anatolyevich never directly calls the Bulgarian ambassador a Soviet agent. Most likely, in his memoirs, Sudoplatov somewhat exaggerated the successes of his department and enlisted the Russophile Stamenov as real agents. The secret of the Soviet peace proposals to Hitler in the first weeks of the war, as well as the secret of Stalin's failed attack on Germany, could be clarified by the personal archive of Joseph Vissarionovich. But, apparently, this archive was thoroughly cleaned by his successors. Even in the folder of TASS messages sent to Stalin, there is a gap falling on the period from April 14 to November 13, 1941. It turns out that even "Tass" messages, in the margins of which eloquent and self-revealing resolutions could remain, in all likelihood, were simply destroyed. If the documents of this period had not been destroyed, but allocated to a separate, especially secret storage unit, then the documents of the end of the 41st and 42nd years would hardly have been left in the same dossier.

Lavrenty Pavlovich also had to deal with purely military issues. True, Beria, although he bore the high rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union, almost did not act as a commander. The only exception is his participation in the battle for the Caucasus in 1942-1943 as a representative of the Stavka. But the Order of Suvorov of the 1st degree, the highest commander's award, Beria received in 1944 not for this, but for "exemplary performance of a special task of the government" - the organization of the deportation of Chechens, Ingush, Karachays, Crimean Tatars and other peoples of the North Caucasus and Crimea.

At the same time, Stalin sometimes willingly accepted a number of Lavrenty Pavlovich's advice on military affairs. He probably remembered that it was Beria who, on the very eve of the Finnish war, warned him about the poor state of the Red Army. Shortly after June 22, 1941, Beria proposed to appoint the heroes of the civil war Voroshilov and Budyonny as commanders of the strategic directions. At the same time, the head of the NKVD had no illusions about their military leadership qualities. Beria knew very well how Voroshilov showed himself in the war with Finland. And a year later, during the battle for the Caucasus, Lavrenty Pavlovich, as we will see, criticized Budyonny very sharply. But the appointment of the leaders of the First Cavalry, well known to the people, to high posts pursued primarily moral goals, it was supposed to strengthen people's faith in victory, in the fact that, like in the civilian, the Red Army would defeat all enemies. In addition, the strategic directions in the command and control system themselves were more decorative structures that did not have real levers of influence on the course of events. Everything was decided by the Headquarters headed by Stalin and younger front commanders. Then many of them, such as Zhukov, Rokossovsky, Konev, Vasilevsky, became marshals, Heroes of the Soviet Union, were declared the main creators of strategic decisions that ensured success in the battle against the insidious enemy. Beria's name was never mentioned in a positive context in connection with the war. It was as if Lavrenty Pavlovich was only engaged in 1941-1945 in that he imprisoned and shot the innocent and deported the "punished peoples." But all the named marshals, according to Sergo Beria, were not at all on bad terms with his father. Rokossovsky could generally feel gratitude to Lavrenty Pavlovich, if only for the fact that he released him from prison. Of course, everything was done according to Stalin's decision, but Konstantin Konstantinovich should have had good feelings for the executor of such an important decision for his future fate.

Marshal Zhukov, according to Beria himself, he simply saved at the end of July 41, when, after the defeat near Smolensk, Stalin was going to deal with Georgy Konstantinovich, who served as chief of the General Staff, very harshly. And only the requests of Beria, Malenkov and Molotov prompted Stalin to confine himself to removing Zhukov from the General Staff and appointing him commander of the Reserve Front. This is all Lavrenty Pavlovich wrote in a letter to the same Malenkov and Molotov after his arrest, and there was no point in lying to him on this issue.

Beria is traditionally accused of cruelty. Here and in the war, only atrocities are attributed to him. But let's see what were, for example, the Soviet marshals, who are considered the positive heroes of the war. In our history textbooks, Marshal Georgy Zhukov appears as the chief architect of the Great Victory, often acting contrary to Stalin's opinion. He is depicted as a suffering hero who, after the war, was undeservedly disgraced by the same Stalin and Khrushchev. Yes, he was harsh, he did everything for the sake of the people, for the sake of victory. And worthy of eternal memory and monuments on the central streets of the main Russian cities.

I want to quote only one document, which hopelessly ruins the reputation of the "people's marshal" and makes everything blasphemous

his glorification. This is a letter from the head of the Main Political Directorate of the Workers 'and Peasants' Navy of the Army

Commissioner of the 2nd rank Ivan Rogov to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) Georgy Malenkov, dated October 5, 1941: "The Head of the Political Directorate of the Baltic Fleet issued on September 28, 1941 directive No. ships and units, that all families of the Red Navy, Red Army and commanders who went over to the side of the enemy, who surrendered to the enemy, will be immediately shot as families of traitors and traitors to the Motherland, and all defectors who surrendered to the enemy will be shot upon their return from captivity."

I immediately asked the PUBalt on the basis of what instructions the directive was issued, contrary to the instructions of the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command of the Red Army No. 270.

Comrade SMIRNOV, member of the KBF Military Council, and comrade LEBEDEV, head of the CP of the KBF, in their telegram dated 10/4/41, report that Directive No. 110 / s was drawn up on the basis of the cipher message of the commander of the Leningrad Front, Comrade Zhukov, No. 4976, which says:

"Explain to all personnel that all the families of those who surrendered to the enemy will be shot, and upon returning from captivity, they will also all be shot."

The People's Commissar of the Navy Comrade KUZNETSOV and I do not know that according to the 2nd order of the Headquarters No. 270, it was changed.

I believe that ciphergram No. 4976 of the command of the Leningrad Front contradicts the instructions of order No. 27 of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of the Red Army.

Let me remind you that the draconian order No. 270 of August 16, 1941 provided only for the deprivation of the families of captured Red Army soldiers of state benefits and assistance. Zhukov, on the other hand, was ready to shoot even infants - this is the only way to understand the words about the execution of all family members. The political administration of the Baltic Fleet did not even dare to literally reproduce Zhukovsky's text, and softened it, pointing out that only defectors were to be shot after returning from captivity. Stalin, who personally dictated order No. 270, in comparison with Georgy Konstantinovich, looks like a true philanthropist. And as for Lavrenty Pavlovich, Georgy Konstantinovich could generally give a big head start. Beria did not kill people without need.

I don't know if anyone was shot under the sinister order No. 4976 during the few days that Zhukov commanded the Leningrad Front, before the urgent call to Moscow after the German breakthrough near Vyazma. In the front line, the families of the prisoners, fortunately, were hardly found in such a short time. But a dozen or two Red Army soldiers, suspected of having been captured, could well have been shot.

Malenkov read the letter on October 8, shortly after the disaster near Vyazma, where the forces of three fronts were surrounded. No written response from Georgy Maksimilianovich has yet been found. It is possible that in the days when the members of the Politburo puzzled over the question of whether we would hold Moscow, and Zhukov, with his extreme cruelty, seemed to them the last hope for salvation, no penalties were applied to him for the cannibal order. Maybe

Perhaps Malenkov only scolded the namesake: they should not, they say, continue to exceed their powers.

And after his cannibalistic order, Georgy Konstantinovich, without a shadow of embarrassment, brilliantly playing sincere indignation, said in 1956, already after the Twentieth Congress, Konstantin Simonov: traitor to the Motherland" - and justified it by the fact that every Soviet person who faced the threat of captivity was obliged to commit suicide, that is, in essence, demanded that several million more suicides be added to all the millions who died in the war. More than half of these people was tortured by the Germans in captivity, died of hunger and disease, but, based on the theory of Mekhlis, it turned out that even those who returned, after going through this hell, had to meet such an attitude at home that they repented that then, at forty first or forty-second, they didn't take their own lives ... Of course, there were cowards, but how can one think that about several million captured soldiers and officers of that army, which nevertheless stopped and defeated the Germans. Well, were they different people than those who later entered Berlin? Were from a different test, worse, more cowardly? How can one demand indiscriminate contempt for all those who were captured as a result of all the catastrophes that befell us at the beginning of the war? .. "

And in fact, there was little sense from draconian orders, such as Stalin's and Zhukovsky's. After order No. 270, grandiose boilers near Kiev and Vyazma followed, in each of which 660 thousand Red Army soldiers were captured, after cipher message No. 49'76 there was a Kharkov encirclement with 240 thousand prisoners, and two encirclements in the Leningrad region - the 2nd shock army in the spring and in the fall of 1942, during which tens of thousands of prisoners were captured. The number of Red Army soldiers who were taken prisoner was determined by the specific operational situation, and by no means by the scale and severity of repressions for surrender. Threats to deal with the family could rather induce soldiers to desert. Who will then establish whether he went missing or surrendered!

It is strange to convince us that Zhukov is not just a believer, but also a person who lived according to Christian precepts. When the rector of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra, Archimandrite Kirill, wrote to Zhukov's daughter Maria about her father: "It is felt that his soul is Christian ... The seal of God's chosenness is felt on him throughout his life," he did not know that the marshal was ready to exterminate even infants. Zhukov cannot be erected monuments, especially to compare his exploits with the exploits of St. George. If we want to preserve at least some kind of moral principle in our children, then in the history textbooks this character should not stand on a par with Suvorov and Kutuzov, but next to Stalin and Yezhov, Abakumov and Beria. Unless Lavrenty Pavlovich, who still believed in God, did not call for children to be shot.

My publication of the execution order of Marshal Zhukov in the September 29, 2000 issue of Izvestia provoked a number of interesting responses from readers, proving that the attitude towards the Red Army throughout the war remained in the spirit of this order, which was in force for no more than ten days. In particular, Pavel Solovyov, a war invalid from the village of Luzhki, Tver Region, states:

"Today, after 55 years, we are obliged to sensibly comprehend everything that happened. I was 17 years old when I got to the front. For about a year I was at the forefront of this war, where death hung over my head every second, and human life was not worth a broken penny "It was a gigantic meat grinder, grinding millions of human lives. Moreover, we must admit the established fact that about five million Germans died, and five times more of ours." He cites a case from his own combat experience on the Kursk Bulge: "We were on the defensive. At night, from the side of the enemy, the roar of engines was heard, which became louder. A rumor spread that these were German tanks. the appearance of German "tigers". They slowly approached, firing on the move. Machine gunners were walking behind the tanks. As luck would have it, I had armor-piercing shells on the firing line, there were only fragmentation ones. The commander ordered me to run to the rear and hurry up the delivery. I broke my head without weapons and caps ran to carry out the order. Then I noticed that the infantry was retreating all over the field. Among the retreating, I noticed the captain, who tried to stop the soldiers swearing. And he shot everyone he ran up to. I ran straight at him. In this situation, I could not explain the reason why I was betting and where. He ran up to me: "Where is your weapon, you bastard?" And shot at me at point-blank range. The bullet whistled over my ear. But the captain was already far away from me. He shot everyone he ran up to. I got up and ran to the front line in my crew. The shells were delivered to us. We repulsed the tank attack, losing 2/3 of our battalion. After the fight, I was chilled. Death was waiting for you not only in front, but also behind. Much has been written about the war. But the whole truth has not yet been written. For me, only writers Vyacheslav Kondratyev, Vasil Bykov, and even Viktor Astafyev wrote truthfully about the war.

In the light of this evidence, it can be assumed that ciphertext No. 4976 managed to come true in the ten days that it was in operation. Like order No. 270, it was intended to intimidate soldiers and commanders, but without real implementation, the threat has little effect. Of course, they didn't manage to get to the families of the prisoners, but they could have shot several dozen Red Army men accused of having been captured.

S. Afonsky from the city of Kstovo, Nizhny Novgorod region, reasonably remarks: "An order is an order ... It is necessary to execute it, and not comments on it. The founder of the Red Army, Trotsky, by special order, introduced "barrage detachments", the purpose of which was to stand behind the attacking units and machine-gun the retreating ones ...

I happened to work with a former sailor of the Black Sea Fleet, lieutenant commander, who participated in the landing on Malaya Zemlya. He said that behind the cruisers with paratroopers, the boats of the detachment were moving in a chain in order to shoot those who decide to turn back. He told this in the late 60s ...

In 1945, in Germany, I myself saw a train of "veal" cars at one of the railway stations. Their doors and windows were tightly locked. The day was hot, and a heavy stench wafted from the carriages.

Urine poured through the floorboards. Women's screams were heard from the cars,

crying, begging. Sentinels with attached bayonets walked along the cars, not letting anyone close to the echelon. Questions were not answered as they should be. But they were still asked insistently: "Who is in the cars?" They shouted in Russian! One sentry could not stand it: "These are German whores." Here's how: first they gave Russia to Moscow, and then they declared those who the Nazis took to Germany as whores ...

It is known that the Soviet Union and Russia suffered much greater human losses in the Great Patriotic War than Germany. Their account is in the millions. Why? Indeed, in 1941 the Germans were advancing, and according to military science, the attackers suffer three times more losses than the defenders. Then the Red Army advanced, but then the losses in manpower would be approximately equal ...

I named all the above facts in order to show: for the order ... Zhukov had "historical prerequisites", and practice confirmed it.

But even if, for example, his threats were not carried out: neither the families of the prisoners were shot, nor the captured Red Army soldiers themselves. And it's good if it remains just a threat. But in any case, she says that even our greatest Soviet commander, the most talented and most experienced, and smart, etc., did not rely on the loyalty of the Soviet soldier to his native communist party, not to his native and beloved I.V. Stalin. He did not even believe in his courage and love for the Motherland. He believed in the soldier's fear of this same party, which in fact could have shot him and his family for putting him in a hopeless situation. Or did not instill in him the desire to defend her and his socialist country at the cost of his own life ...

Neither condemn nor defend G.K. Zhukov is not going and I can not. To do this, you need to have reliable and irrefutable facts. We have one main and indisputable fact - the Victory over Nazi Germany. This fact consists of many other facts, of the complex interweaving of the relationship between the soldiers and those who led them. He led as best he could, having his pluses and minuses, his greatness and insignificance. The order to shoot the families of those who surrendered to the enemy does not honor him. But it does no credit to those who forced him to make such a decision. The troops retreat. They almost run. Many surrender in captivity 3 million captured Red Army soldiers. They must be stopped. Now. How? Yes, at least anything - even fear, greater than the fear of personal death, fear for their relatives - for their lives. At the same time, the emphasis was not on the fact that they could be destroyed by the invaders, but on the fact that they would be killed by their own!"

Lecturer in the history department of the Kazan State Academy of Architecture and Civil Engineering, retired colonel, participant in the war since the tragic October 41, Petr Pavlovich Lebedev believes that the authenticity of the Zhukovsky ciphergram does not cause much doubt, not only because the publication is equipped with the necessary archival attributes, but mainly because which fits well with the constantly repeated demands to mercilessly and en masse deal with their own fighters, whose behavior in battle does not correspond to what the "marshal of victory" expects from them. And Pavel Petrovich gives other examples of nothing

justified Zhukov's cruelty: "A letter from the pre-war

the head of Soviet writing V. Stavsky, who signaled to Stalin about "excesses" in the 24th army of the Zhukov front, when up to 600 people "deserters and traitors" were shot in a short time and only 80 people were presented for government awards ... And this happened in a period like to the successful Yelninskaya offensive operation of the front. And here is an example of "creative comprehension" of Stalin's famous order No. 227, which introduced barrage detachments at the fronts, the experience of which Zhukov shares with the high command in his report on the first results of the offensive Rzhev-Vyazemsky operation, which (albeit without great success, but with huge losses) was led by the "creator of all victories" himself:

"To prevent the backlog of individual works and to fight cowards and alarmists, each attacking battalion of the first echelon was followed by commanders specially appointed by the military councils of the armies on the tank. As a result of all the measures taken, the troops of the 31st and 20th armies successfully broke through the enemy's defenses." And in the Stalinist order, by the way, it is said about the other purpose of these detachments. However, the philanthropic leader hardly reproached his enterprising favorite, just as, I think, he fully approved the creative interpretation of order No. not about emotional breakdowns in a critical situation, which can at least be understood, but about special methods of commanding troops that you could call terrorist. Here are the demands of just one of Zhukov's many such orders relating to the Moscow battle of 1941:

"Ruthlessly shoot the guilty, not stopping before the complete annihilation of all those who left the front." Since there were tens of thousands retreating under the onslaught of a powerful enemy, and it was unthinkable to obtain permission to withdraw from the front and the army, and even in writing (as Zhukov demands in another order), the demand for the "complete destruction" of one's own troops according to In essence, it could mean the opening of a second front, already behind the backs of their own troops desperately fighting the enemy. And this is "a real commander and a real general," according to Georgy Vladimov, the author of a very good book about war and generals!

In my opinion, Georgy Zhukov possessed many qualities of an outstanding military leader: iron will, high organizational skills, personal courage, but he was not a commander, and even an outstanding one, especially in our traditional Russian

understanding.

Once again, this manifested itself after the war, when Cohn was Minister of Defense. Everyone who happened to serve then in command positions should remember the cruel, ruthless reprisals, accompanied by humiliation of the human dignity of subordinates, which the "people's commander" cultivated by personal example. He could no longer shoot without trial, but he broke the fate of how many worthy people ... Take, for example, the fate of the outstanding naval commander N. Kuznetsov.

Ultimately, these methods of troop leadership turned out to be ineffective even from a purely pragmatic point of view, and often

led to the opposite result. Fear of extrajudicial executions led to an increase in the number of defectors, for whom Hitler's captivity became the only salvation. The document found in the archives, in my opinion, is not a sensation at all. It is perceived as a sensation because the history of the war is cluttered with all sorts of myths, on the protection of which the newly-minted censors are steadfastly and aggressively fighting ... Free citizens of a free Russia ... do not need myths. They are not needed for "patriotic education" either, because there is no special "patriotic" educational "history. The value of history, like any science, is in the pursuit of truth. This is its educational, patriotic potential. Both "darkness" and "white whale" if they serve the interests of individuals or the political situation."

It is worth adding to this only that, when it came to people close to him, Georgy Konstantinovich showed unexpected gentleness. For example, his former colleague in Khalkhin Gol and former assistant Ivan Mikhailovich Afonin, in the 44th, already commanding a corps, creatively developing order No. 227, for no reason shot the head of intelligence of the division. So Zhukov proposed not to bring the general to trial by a military tribunal, but to limit himself to "measures of public and party influence." And Afonin successfully fought until the end of the war, commanded the 18th Guards Rifle Corps during the liberation of Czechoslovakia, and then also participated in the Victory Parade!

Regarding General Afonin, the head of the Main Directorate of Personnel of the Red Army, Colonel-General F.I. Golikov wrote to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU G.M. Malenkov on April 30, 1944: "Marshal of the Soviet Union comrade Zhukov (encrypted No. 117396 dated April 28 this year) reported to the People's Commissar of Defense Marshal of the Soviet Union comrade Stalin about the personal execution by the commander of the 18th rifle corps, major general, chief 23' 77th Infantry Division Major Andreev.

I present to you on this question a copy of my report addressed to Comrade. Stalin".

Malenkov told Stalin the day before, on April 29: "Marshal Zhukov reported to you about the hand-written execution by the commander of the 18th rifle corps, Major General Afonin, the head of the Intelligence Department of the 237th rifle division, Major Andreev.

Despite the fact that this unauthorized execution was committed on April 12 of this year, the report was made only on April 28, that is, after 16 days.

Contrary to the petition of Marshal Zhukov - not to bring Afonin to trial by the Military Tribunal, but to confine himself to measures of public and party influence, I beg you to bring Afonin to court.

If, contrary to all regulations, orders of the Supreme High Command and the principles of the Red Army, General Afonin considers it permissible for himself to strike a Soviet officer, then he can hardly count on the fact that every officer of the Red Army (and even more so a combat officer) can remain after such a physical and moral insult and shock within the discipline, so ugly and easily violated by the general himself.

In addition, after the murder of Andreev, one can hardly take on faith the reference of General Afonin that Afonin tried to strike again and behaved boldly. As for the positive qualities of General Afonin, because of which Marshal Zhukov asks the latter not to judge, then Colonel General Chernyakhovsky gave me the following description of Afonin the other day (orally): lightweight, arrogant gentleman, intolerant in dealing with people; does not know artillery and cannot organize interaction on the battlefield; not studying; braggart, man of crackling phrases.

Tov. Chernyakhovsky (according to him) expressed all this about Afonin personally to Marshal Zhukov.

Afonin worked for Marshal Zhukov as a guarantor at the beginning of 1943 and at the headquarters of the group at Khalkhin Gol.

Interestingly, in his memoirs, Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov gave Ivan Mikhailovich Afonin a completely different description. Recalling the battles at Khalkhin Gol, he wrote: "Before dawn on July 3, 1939, the senior adviser of the Mongolian army, Colonel I.M. Japanese troops, who, secretly crossing the Khalkhin-Gol River under cover of night, attacked units of the 6th Cavalry Division of the MPR. Using superiority in strength, they captured Mount Bain-Tsagan and the surrounding areas before dawn on July 3. 6th Cavalry The MPR division retreated to the northwestern parts of the Bain-Tsagan mountain.

Assessing the danger of the new situation, Ivan Mikhailovich Afonin immediately arrived at the command post of the commander of the Soviet troops ... and reported on the current situation on Mount Bain-Tsagan. It was clear that in connection with the unorganized withdrawal of the 6th Mongolian Cavalry Division in this area, no one could block the path of the Japanese grouping to strike at the flank and rear of the main grouping of our troops.

Here Ivan Mikhailovich appears as an intelligent commander, able to correctly assess the situation. And you won't think that this is a lightweight and arrogant person, unable to organize command and control, but capable of hitting and shooting a subordinate for nothing.

From Golikov's letter, the picture of the incident becomes clearer. Afonin for some reason went over Andreev's face, the major could not stand it and hit back. Then the gallant general, apparently, realized that he could not defeat the big scout in hand-to-hand combat, grabbed his revolver and shot the obstinate on the spot.

Zhukov stood up for Afonin, perhaps also because shortly before, in March 44, on the 1st Ukrainian Front, which he received after Vatutin was wounded, he had exactly the same incident, fortunately, ended not so tragically. Head of the engineering troops of the front, General B.V. Blagoslavov recalled how Zhukov, having just taken command, gathered the commanders at a meeting at night. There, on the basis of brief reports, he was ready to present some for awards, remove others from their posts, put others on trial, and simply shoot the fourth. At the same time, the marshal widely used untranslatable Russian expressions and addressed everyone

exclusively on "you", although Bruderschaft had never drunk with anyone before. Zhukov immediately did not like Blagoslovov. When the general asked to address him without swearing and threats, the marshal drew his Mausers, Blagoslavov, in response, grabbed his parabellum (both preferred captured weapons). There was an awkward pause. Blagoslavov reminded Zhukov that he was waiting for his shot. This was not just a general, but a general of engineering troops, a man much more educated than an ordinary infantry general, and who had a well-developed self-esteem. But the duel did not take place. Zhukov realized that for the execution on the spot of such a high-ranking general, he would not be patted on the head. This is not some regiment or even division commander. Georgy Konstantinovich holstered the Mauser and promised that he would deal with Blagoslavov. However, Zhukov did not get his hands on the obstinate general, perhaps the only one in the Red Army (others did not take it down silently). Apparently, the limits of his power did not extend to the extrajudicial removal from office of army commanders and those corresponding to them at the front level. Blagoslavov successfully ended the war in his former position on the 2nd Belorussian Front near Rokossovsky, with whom he had excellent relations. For lower ranks, like Major Andreev, such "resistance to evil by force" usually ended in death. In general, the scenes of Marshal Zhukov against General Blagoslavov or General Afonin against Major Andreev do not even resemble a mediocre western, but an ordinary showdown on a bandit raspberry, where godfathers, in the role of Zhukov and Afonin, assert their power over the lads - subordinate officers and generals. Above all the Red Army men, officers, generals and marshals was the main godfather - Stalin. The generals who commanded the corps and above, and the marttals were afraid of him, because only the "father of peoples" could order them to be shot, demoted or imprisoned (generals were not sent to penal battalions, fearing that they would be captured or run over to the enemy). The officers and major generals who commanded the divisions were not afraid of Stalin and sincerely loved him, sometimes turning to him or to his de facto party deputy Malenkov with complaints of harassment and injustice on the part of the higher authorities, and sometimes with uniform denunciations of this authorities. But the officers were afraid and often hated their immediate superiors - from the company commander to the front commander, each of whom could at any moment shoot them or send them to the penal battalion. At the same time, of course, the threat from his own battalion commander was much more real than from a distant commander, and even more so a front commander, who had little chance of falling under a hot hand. Here, in relation to their soldiers, the platoon commanders, and to some extent the company commanders, were forced to be more circumspect and not shoot them without special need and not send them to penal companies - otherwise it was possible to freely receive a bullet in battle from the convict comrades back. The only exceptions, as we saw, were penal units and subunits, where the permanent (officer) staff shot the variable (penalty) for a sweet soul. All the same, they will die tomorrow in battle, and the officers, together with the penalty box, do not go on the attack, but stand behind as a detachment. In the usual parts of the soldiers

they shot not immediate superiors, but higher ones - starting from the headquarters of the battalion or detachments and commandant companies from the NKVD soldiers. A bullet in the back did not threaten them.

Those Red Army soldiers who were able to escape from captivity and encirclement fell under the wing of Lavrenty Pavlovich in filtration camps. German propaganda gladly described the order in these camps in the military press in order to encourage their own soldiers not to surrender: if the Russians do this with their prisoners, then what will they do with the captured Germans. On June 21, 1942, a member of the Military Council of the Volkhov Front A.I. The Zaporozhets sent Malenkov, Shcherbakov, Beria and Poskrebyshch a translation of an article from the German newspaper "Di Fronte" dated May 10, 1942 under the eloquent headline "Prisoners of war enemies. How Stalin treats his soldiers." It quite reasonably stated: "The Soviets consider all prisoners of war as traitors. They refused international treaties signed by all cultural states - there is no exchange of seriously wounded, there is no postal service between prisoners of war and their relatives.

Now the Soviets went even further in this direction: they took under suspicion all those who escaped or otherwise returned from captivity of their own prisoners of war (the so-called "encirclement", many of whom were released by the Germans and hid the fact of being in captivity).

The rulers of the Soviets, not without reason, are afraid that everyone who found himself on the other side of the "socialist paradise", returning to the USSR, will understand the Bolshevik lie. In each such they see a dangerous anti-Soviet propagandist."

It also spoke about filtration camps for former prisoners: "By order of the People's Commissar of Defense, all those who returned from captivity are treated as" former "military personnel, and their military rank is taken away from everyone without trial or investigation.

For these former military personnel, prefabricated and test camps are arranged, subordinated to NGOs ...

When sent to collection points, former servicemen are confiscated cold steel and firearms. Personal belongings, documents and letters remain with the detainees. Signs, part numbers, as well as the place and time of missing, are recorded in special books. Postal service for former military personnel is prohibited. All letters addressed to them are stored in the commandant's office in sealed envelopes. Former servicemen do not receive any salary or clothing.

The time spent in prefabricated, test camps is limited to 5-7 days. After this time, the healthy are transferred to special NKVD camps, and the sick and wounded are transferred to infirmaries. Sending takes place under the protection of the NKVD detachments. Upon arrival at the NKVD camp, former servicemen "are subject to vigilant observation." What is meant by this special observation and where it ends is already well known today.

Beria also oversaw the partisan movement. Many partisan detachments were commanded by personnel Chekists. The most famous of them, thanks to his book "Strong in spirit" - Dmitry Nikolaevich Medvedev. He led the Avengers squad, operating close to

Rivne - the capital of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine. The backbone of the detachment was made up of NKVD officers. The legendary intelligence officer Nikolai Ivanovich Kuznetsov interacted with Medvedev's detachment. His main task, however, was not intelligence, but the commission of terrorist acts against the Reichskommissar Erich Koch and other top officials of the occupation administration. The figure of Kuznetsov became a cult figure, became known throughout the country, and thanks to this, the Avengers squad became widely known.

Other Chekist detachments still remain in the shadows. The more interesting is the story of the commander of one of them, who led not just a partisan detachment, but a detachment named after Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria himself. It turns out that not all partisans were genuine defenders of the population from the German invaders.

Here is what the commission on the history of the Patriotic War under the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Belarus told on September 24, 1943, Lieutenant Colonel of State Security, Hero of the Soviet Union Kirill Prokofievich Orlovsky: "I was born in 1895, in the village of Myshkovichi, Kirov District, Mogilev Region, BSSR. Belarusian. General education - secondary, party - higher (graduated from the Komvuz of the peoples of the West. Organizer of red partisan detachments and sabotage groups in the USSR, Spain, China. Member of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks since 1918. Lieutenant colonel of state security. Served in the Red Army from 1918 to 1920. He graduated from the First Moscow Infantry Command Courses in 1920. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded for active combat work in the rear of the German occupiers, in the Baranovichi and Pinsk regions of the BSSR.

In 1932, for active combat work in the rear of the White Poles, the government of the BSSR was awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor of the BSSR. In 1937, he was awarded the Order of Lenin for combat work in the rear of Franco's army (Spain), and in 1943 he was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

For 8 years of combat and reconnaissance work behind enemy lines, I had to illegally cross the front line and the state border line with a group of my armed fighters more than 70 times.

Under my leadership, several tens of thousands of officers, landowners, gendarmes and policemen were destroyed, while I lost only 6 people of my comrades killed and several people wounded (we are dealing with nothing more than Kirill Prokofievich's fantasy about tens of thousands of destroyed enemies. - /B.

A

The commanders of the detachments were: named after Kirov - comrade Botin, named after Sverdlov - comrade Khaletsky, named after Beria - I ...

Briefly about the Kirov detachment - I organized the Kirov detachment exclusively from Jews who fled from the Nazi execution. I knew that I was facing incredible difficulties, but I was not afraid of these difficulties, I went for it only because all the partisan detachments and partisan units of the Baranovichi and Pinsk regions around us refused these people. There were cases of killing them. For example, the "partisans" - anti-Semites of the Tsygankov detachment killed 11 Jews, the peasants of the village of Radzhalovichi, Pinsk region, killed 17 Jews, the "partisans" of the detachment of them. Shchors killed 7 Jews.

When I first arrived at these people, I found them unarmed, barefoot and hungry. They told me: "We want to take revenge on Hitler, but we have no way."

After that, I spared neither my strength nor the time to teach these people the tactics of guerrilla warfare against our common sworn enemy. And I must say that the energy I expended was not in vain. It would seem that former speculators, small merchants, artisans, etc., completely incapable of armed struggle - these people, wanting to take revenge on the German monsters for the shed people's blood, under my leadership conducted at least 15 military operations in 2.5 months, daily destroyed the telegraph telephone communication of the enemy, killed the Nazis, policemen and traitors to our country. Gradually, they became not only disciplined, but also bold, both in carrying out sabotage and in night transitions from one area to another.

Along with sabotage, organizational and reconnaissance work, I daily waged a merciless struggle against bandit sentiment towards the local population on the part of some bandit "partisan" groups in the Baranovichi and Pinsk regions. I could not help but pay attention to this issue, since in every village there were cases of drunkenness, looting, rape of women, murder, arson of farms and villages by bandit groups who, under the guise of partisans, systematically terrorized the local population and thereby compromised the people's avengers - partisans, intimidated and repelled the peasants from helping the partisans in their struggle.

I can give you some facts:

By order of the commander of the partisan group, a former prisoner of war, the son of a kulak, a native of the Kalinin region, Andrey Leontiev, in March 1943, the village of Novoselki, Gantsevsky district, Pinsk region (150 houses) was burned only because there were 10-15 people in the village of the so-called "self-defense" (members self-defense detachment organized at the call of the Germans. - /B.S./).

As a result of such a bandit act, half of the male population of this village went into the service of the Germans.

Separate partisan groups of Semyonov, Pugachev, and others systematically drank, shot, robbed, and raped women on the territory of the Lyakhovichi and Kletsk districts of the Baranovichi region.

Therefore, the bandits responsible for this case were shot at my request in June 1943.

The local Belarusian population, seeing in the person of the partisan detachment named after Beria their defenders not only in front of the German invaders, but also in front of the bandit elements hiding in the forest under the guise of partisans, was very pleased with this.

The Belarusian population provides every possible assistance to the partisans, and more than that - in the Minsk and Pinsk regions, about half of the adult male population went to the partisans. Of course, the family has its black sheep - there are traitors from the side of the population ... There are no more of them

2-3%. At the same time, I saw a rather large number of Latvians, Kubans, and others serving in punitive expeditions and waging a merciless fight against Belarusian partisans.

Let me give you a fact. On the railroad Baranovichi - Minsk at the end of June 1943, the guards of the Austrians were removed, as unreliable, and replaced by Ukrainians and Kubans.

The Germans are currently flirting with the Belarusian population of Western Belarus, they treat them better than the population of the eastern regions of Belarus. Quite a lot of newspapers are published in Belarusian, German, Polish. Newspapers agitate the population that the Germans gave them a good life, liquidated collective farms, divided the land, but not a word is mentioned in the newspapers that two wagons of manufactured goods and essential goods have not been brought to Belarus in 2 years.

Such a product as salt, the local population and partisan detachments are forced to eat a boiled solution from one artificial fertilizer.

By the way, there is no reason to believe that Lavrenty Pavlovich himself was an anti-Semite. He had nothing to do with the post-war campaign against cosmopolitanism. On the contrary, this campaign was inspired by Zhdanov, Beria's main rival in the struggle for closeness to Stalin. Also, Lavrenty Pavlovich was not involved in the fabrication of the cases of the "Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee" and the "case of doctors", which had obvious anti-Semitic overtones. On the contrary, immediately after Stalin's death, he initiated the rehabilitation of the doctors arrested in the case and offered to rehabilitate the already convicted and most of the executed JAC members, but did not have time to complete this case because of his arrest.

Interestingly, Beria himself was often considered a Jew. It began during the war in anti-Semitic pamphlets published by the Germans in the occupied Soviet territories. Thus, in V. Luzhsky's work "The Jewish Question", published in Smolensk in 1943, which claims to be scientific, it was stated: "Antisemitism, that is, hatred of Jews, an antidote against the corrupting influence of Jews, lives instinctively in every healthy Aryan nation. - the phenomenon is not bookish, but deeply popular: it is the self-defense of the national spirit against Jewish dominance.

The Jews themselves, and only they, are to blame for the fact that the Aryan harbors hatred and contempt for them. The main feature of every Jew, whether he is a capitalist, or a small trader, or an employee, is that he considers himself to belong to a chosen tribe, and all other people are garbage, "goyim" (gentiles), obliged to obey him. No wonder the Jewish scholar Yehuda Halevi said: "Israel is the heart of nations." There is a certainty in the soul of the Jews that the time will come when the Jews will achieve world domination, bind the "goyim" in one chain and force them to work for themselves.

The ruthlessness with which, at the expense of the rest of the population, the Jews push their compatriots forward and lead them to power is also one of the reasons that the innate, but not always realized instinct of self-preservation of the Aryan population is against

Jewry grows into conscious anti-Semitism.

The Jew does not like to engage in productive labor. It is characterized by the desire for a parasitic existence at the expense of

other peoples. The most cruel exploiters emerge from among the Jews. It is very rare to meet a Jewish farmer, a Jewish miner, a Jewish carpenter: the Jews leave physical labor for the "goyim". They themselves are engaged exclusively in commercial and speculative fraud. In Soviet Russia, Jews settled in the best, "warmest" places - in Moscow and other cities, ousting the Russian people.

The main "demon" of Russia, Luzhsky, following the Nazi propaganda, represented Lazar Kaganovich, even belittling the role of Stalin for this purpose: "Jews in the population of the USSR - 1.7 percent, in the party (according to the 1922 party census) - 5.2 percent, in the Central Committee - 25.7, in the Politburo as a whole in the era of Lenin - 36.8 percent, by the end of the era of Lenin - 42.9 percent ... The Kaganovich group seized all the leading posts in the party, and above all the Politburo, the Orgburo and the general secretariat of the party, as well as all the most important posts in the Central Committee of the Party ... Stalin, with his brute energy, merciless cruelty and cunning, with his primitive spiritual level, is the most suitable person for the post of "supreme leader" and "father of the peoples" of the USSR. His mental horizon is limited, the stronger his endurance and perseverance. Lenin appreciated the firmness and practical mind of Stalin and at the same time warned against this person who would abuse power. "This cook will prepare very spicy dishes," Lenin wrote in his "Testament" ...

Kaganovich is a typical intriguer and behind-the-scenes master. Along with his organizational talents, his extraordinary cunning, dexterity, great efficiency, and good memory should be noted. He is undoubtedly smarter than Stalin. If a rude Georgian is the heart of Kaganovich's clique, then Kaganovich himself is its brain...

Kaganovich, as the leader of the victorious group, mercilessly destroyed those of his compatriots who did not want to abandon the unsuccessful, and therefore harmful to all Soviet Jewry, Trotskyist opposition ... "

Here Luzhsky deliberately distorts. Indeed, in the first post-revolutionary years, the Bolshevik Party included an increased percentage of Jews, as well as Poles, the peoples most strongly oppressed by tsarism, and therefore especially willing to join the ranks of revolutionary organizations. However, with the defeat of the Trotskyist-Zinoviev opposition and the subsequent ousting from power and the destruction of most of the old Bolsheviks, the share of Jews in the leadership of the party and the country fell sharply. This is clearly seen in the example of the highest commanding staff of the NKVD. If in 1934 31.25 percent of high-ranking security officers were Jews, and 4.17 percent were Poles, then by 1941 there were no Poles among them, and the proportion of Jews fell to 5.5 percent. But the share of Georgians increased - from 3.13 to 6.59 percent, which was associated with the arrival of Beria in the NKVD. Only Lazar Kaganovich remained in leading positions among the Jews, and even Lev Mekhlis. Luzhsky also attributed a big role to Lazar's brother Mikhail Moiseevich Kaganovich, People's Commissar for the aviation industry, not knowing that on July 1, 1941 he shot himself.

after he was accused of participating in a "right-wing fascist conspiracy" (as the case of aviation generals, which was discussed above), was called.

In Luzhsky's pamphlet, special emphasis was placed on the "dominance" of Jews in Soviet punitive organs: "In 1934, the old Chekist Jew Hershel Yagoda became the head of the GPU. His closest assistants were Jews: Agranov-Sorenzon, Guy, Slutsky, Shanin, Belsky, Mogilsky, Berman, Flirin and others (none of them, except for the mythical Mogilsky, survived the "Yezhovshchina"; Shanin, by the way, was not a Jew, but a Russian) The GPU receives one more task within the framework of the five-year plan: to carry out a number of construction works - canals, highways, railways, which are of great strategic importance.

The construction of canals: the Belomorsky, Moscow - Volga and other structures, where the labor of millions of prisoners was used, entailed colossal casualties (from cold, hunger to exhaustion) among the workers, and their Jewish leaders (Berman, Kogan, Firin) received for such deadly construction orders.

In September 1936, the era of the almighty Yagoda, entangled in a behind-the-scenes struggle, ended. He was replaced by Yezhov (Russian, married to a Jewess), one of the servile careerists of the Kaganovich clique, who soon fell out of favor himself. At present, the NKVD is in the hands of the Caucasian Jew Beria, who has preserved all the traditions of this body of Jewish-Bolshevik terror, up to the "Jewishization" of its apparatus.

The heavy hand of Kaganovich's clique did not escape agriculture either. The era of Stalin-Kaganovich brought with it forced collectivization, that is, the destruction of the economic independence and property of the peasants. This struggle against the individual farming of the Russian peasants was waged from the very beginning by the Jews. By order of Lazar Kaganovich, the Jews Yagoda and Bauman (Secretary of the Central Committee for Agriculture in 1929-1934, German by nationality) begin to liquidate the best representatives of the peasantry through incredible taxes, exile, imprisonment and executions. The peasantry fought for their land and property with unheard-of courage.

In 1932-33, again under the leadership of Lazar Kaganovich and with the participation of the Jews Krinitsky (head of the Central Administration of the MTS) and Yakovlev-Epshtein (then People's Commissar for Agriculture), a new campaign against the peasants was launched. Under the MTS, political departments are introduced, whose task is to strictly carry out all the agricultural measures of the Jewish government.

The results of collectivization are known. It led to a decline in agriculture and a terrible famine in the countryside in 1933, which killed many millions of peasants...

There is no doubt that Soviet Jewry also holds the press in its tenacious hands. Jewish editors, journalists, critics filled the editorial offices of Soviet newspapers, magazines, agencies (TASS), press and publishing departments. It is not always possible to determine the degree of Jewish dominance in the press, since the method of pseudonyms is widespread in the Soviet press. The old conspiratorial habit of pre-revolutionary Bolsheviks of having multiple surnames or nicknames combined with the Jewish desire for anonymity. Few

who knows, for example, that under the Russian surname Koltsov is hiding the Jew Friedland, one of the famous Soviet journalists (he was safely shot in 1940), under Borodin - a Jew

Mandelstam (actually a Jew Gruzenberg, one of the leaders of the Sovinformburo, who shared the fate of Koltsov after the war.), etc. d.

No less successful for the Jews were their "conquests" in the field of cultural life and art in the Soviet Union. The Jews Brodsky and Katsman perpetuate the faces of Jewish-Bolshevik dignitaries on the canvas, the Jewish architect Iofan erects the Palace of Soviets - a symbol of the Jewish Bolshevik regime (never built because of the war.), Goldstein, Oistrakh and other virtuosos represent the art of music in the Soviet Union.

In the field of science, the influence of Jews is also very destructive... At the head of the notorious union of militant atheists is the Jew Yaroslavsky-Gubelman...

It is well known to what persecution the Bolsheviks subjected the Russian Church. During the reign of Jewish Bolshevism, more than 40,000 priests were "liquidated", more than 14,000 churches were destroyed and ruined ... Of the 900 monasteries of old Russia, only one still functions. While Orthodox churches in the USSR are closed or turned into anti-religious museums, clubs, garages, etc., the Jews in their synagogues freely serve their God. Could there be more convincing proof of Jewish dominance in church-religious life in the USSR?"

Luzhsky convinced his readers that "after the collapse of liberal illusions, Bolshevism remained the main Jewish instrument for gaining world domination. to proceed with the execution of his monstrous plan and declared war on National Socialist Germany, and in her person and on all the young free peoples of Europe. However, the iron hand of the leader of the German people stopped the Jewish sword raised over the peoples of Europe.

A gigantic struggle for the bright future of mankind is now taking place along the vast stretch of the Eastern Front. In the battles that took place on the Eastern Front, the blood of a German soldier is shed, fighting for the liberation of the Motherland, and with it all of Europe, from the terrible ghost of Jewish communism. In these battles, the blood of the deceived Russian soldier is shed, who does not know what he is doing, defending the Stalin-Kaganovich clique. The struggle is for the crushing of the strongest stronghold of world Jewry. The question can be solved only - or - or. Either world Jewry, having won the battle, will seize the world into its hands and turn the flourishing cities and villages of Europe into a cemetery and gardens of torture, or truth will triumph and the peoples of the new Europe liberated from the Jewish yoke will unite into a friendly family to build a truly socialist society on earth.

We see that Providence will give strength to the German people, in collaboration with all the peoples of Europe, to destroy forever on earth

bloody Jewish nightmare and free the world from the power of the "golden calf",
proclaiming the only value of humanity - work"

Stalin, unlike Beria, hardly read Luzhsky's opus, but even during the war he began to act according to the simple recipes of this pamphlet.

In 1942, he took care of the national composition of artists and replaced the leadership of the Moscow and Leningrad Conservatories and the Bolshoi Theater with representatives of the "indigenous nationality". And after 1945, he dealt with the leaders of the media, scientists and theater critics, who were dubious on the fifth point, approving the "Russian priority" in all branches of knowledge. From now on, the way to the nomenklatura was closed to the Jews.

During the war, Beria went to the front three times. Twice - in August September 1942 and in March 1943 to the Caucasus as a representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. The third time he happened to accompany Stalin during a trip to the Rzhev region to the Kalinin Front in August 1943, Lavrenty Pavlovich had to act as a commander only once in his life - in the fall of the 42nd in the Caucasus. There were diametrically opposed opinions about how successful his actions were, and the day of Beria's arrest naturally became the boundary between them. Back in 1950, the second secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia, M.I. Baramilya defended his Ph.D. thesis on "The Outstanding Role of Comrade Beria in the Defense of the Caucasus" (an arrest in the so-called "Mingrelian case" prevented it from being published as a separate book). Army General Hero of the Soviet Union I.I. Maslennikov, who in 1939 was nominated by Beria to the post of commander of the border troops and deputy people's commissar of internal affairs of the USSR, and in 1942-1943 commanded the Northern Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front and the North Caucasian Front. In 1952, an article by Zavyalov and Kalyadin "The Battle for the Caucasus" appeared in the August issue of the Military Thought magazine. Regarding this article, Maslennikov sent a special letter to the head of the Military Scientific Directorate of the General Staff, where he noted: "On page 56, characterizing the activities of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of the USSR, the authors only casually and very briefly mention the enormous creative work and the fundamental political organizational measures that he carried out Comrade Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria, who created a radical change that changed the whole situation, despite the extremely difficult situation that had developed on the Caucasian fronts by August 1942. Such a description of the activities of Comrade L.P. Beria does not give an exhaustive picture of all the activities that were carried out under the personal and direct supervision of Comrade Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria.

L.P. Beria, owning the Stalinist style of leadership, by personal example showed examples of the Bolshevik, state, military, party-political and economic leadership of the Transcaucasian Front (August 1942 - January 1943), brilliantly implemented the instructions of Comrade Stalin.

During the investigation into the lot of Beria, the military, quite naturally, spoke completely differently about the military leadership talent of the defeated marshal. Generals of the General Staff Pokrovsky and

Platonov wrote a special report for investigators "On the issue of Beria's criminal activities during the defense of the Caucasus." There, in particular, it was stated: "To fulfill the task of defense in the eastern

On August 8, the Northern Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front was created, the commander of which, apparently at the insistence of Beria, was General Maslennikov, who had previously unsuccessfully commanded the army on the Kalinin Front ... General Maslennikov, undoubtedly taking advantage of the patronage of Beria, often ignored the instructions of the commander front and its actions delayed the regrouping of troops.

And Lieutenant General S.M. Shtemenko, who traveled with Beria to the Caucasus at the head of an operational group of officers of the General Staff, testified: "... There were many things in Beria's actions that not only did not contribute to the defense of the Caucasus, but, on the contrary, disorganized the defense. First of all, Beria created parallel headquarters front, a special task force headed by a general from the NKVD, which was entrusted with the defense of the passes ... This group included people who were little competent in military affairs ...

The second act of Beria, which disorganized the defense of the Caucasus, was the replacement of the commander of the 46th Army, General Sergatskov, with General Leselidze, who did not discredit himself in any way. Such an unnecessary replacement of the commander in a tense situation could in no way contribute to strengthening the defense ... During Beria's stay in the Caucasus, the military command was actually removed from his leadership. Beria in his activities sought to rely on the NKVD officers, most of whom were completely incompetent in military affairs.

In essence, all these actions of Beria, connected with the defense of the passes of the Main Caucasian Range, as the main task at that time, harmed this defense and created favorable conditions for the enemy, and thereby increased the threat of German penetration into the Transcaucasus.

Shtemenko was echoed by the former commander of the Transcaucasian Front, General of the Army I.V. Tyulenev: "The NKVD troops arrived in the Zakfront. These troops were on special account and at the disposal of Beria. Therefore, they were not used for active combat operations.

I put before the Stavka the question of transferring at least a part of the NKVD troops stationed on the territory of the Zakfront (15-20 regiments) to the command of the Transfrontal Front. I.V. Stalin approved my idea, but Beria, who was present at the same time, sharply opposed this, allowing rude attacks on the front command. Of the 121 thousand troops of the NKVD, which were mostly inactive, Beria agreed to transfer only 5-7 thousand to the disposal of the Zakfront, and then at the insistence of I.V. Stalin".

But Tyulenev was appointed commander of the front on the recommendation of Beria! On September 1, 1942, Lavrenty Pavlovich telegraphed Stalin: "I consider it necessary to appoint Tyulenev as commander of the Transcaucasian Front, who, for all his shortcomings, is more in line with this appointment than Budyonny. It should be noted that in connection with his retreats, Budyonny's authority in the Caucasus has fallen significantly, not to mention already about the fact that, due to their illiteracy, unconditionally

fail the case. "The former commander of the First Cavalry Beria did not put high, and he did not place too high hopes on his former subordinate cavalry soldier Tyulenev. And, it seems, he was not mistaken in his assessment.

Shtemenko, later describing in his memoirs his monthly trip to the Transcaucasus, although we do not mention Beria in a single word (he transfers his functions to the head of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff, Lieutenant General P.I. Bodin), but does not find, as if, any traces of the disorganization of the Soviet defense. Here is how he describes in his memoirs the call to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief that preceded the trip: "Pay special attention to the Baku direction," Stalin said, turning to Bodin ... "You will need to take these colonels with you when you go."

Further, according to Sergei Matveyevich, events developed as follows: "Only a few days after being called to Headquarters, namely on August 21, Bodin announced to me: "Get ready, tomorrow at 4 o'clock you will go with me to the airfield. Take the cipher clerk and several directions "... In the morning, at the appointed time, we drove in Bodin's car to the Central Airfield. There, the C-47 plane was already waiting for us. Colonel V. G. Grachev, the commander of the ship, introduced himself to Bodin.

They flew to Tbilisi through Central Asia. The direct route there was already blocked by the Germans. We landed in Krasnovodsk in the evening, and when it got dark, we went across the Caspian Sea to Baku, Tbilisi.

We landed in Tbilisi almost at midnight and went straight from the airfield to the headquarters of the Front. The city has not yet slept. Many of the streets were brightly lit and full of people.

P.I. Bodin immediately heard the report of the chief of staff of the front, A.I. Subbotin and explained with what tasks we arrived. There were quite a few of them: to clarify the situation on the spot, to outline additional measures to strengthen the defense of Transcaucasia and put them into practice, to create reserves from the troops that retreated and retreat to Transcaucasia from the north, as well as to prevent the mobilization of new contingents from the local population, and, finally, to speed up preparation of defensive lines, primarily in the Baku direction. In conclusion, Bodin turned to the front commander: "Do you know that the allies are trying to use our difficult situation on the fronts and wrest consent to the entry of British troops into the Transcaucasus? This, of course, cannot be allowed. The State Defense Committee considers the defense of the Transcaucasus the most important state task, and we must take all measures to repel the onslaught of the enemy, bleed him, and then defeat him. Hitler's hopes and the desires of the allies must be buried ... ".

Why does the chief of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff suddenly begin to speak on behalf of the State Defense Committee? And why does the lieutenant general, not at all embarrassed, reprimand Marshal Budyonny, commander of the front? Yes, because this monologue was actually delivered not by Bodin, but by Beria, I have no doubts about this; the general commissar of state security could not only reprimand the marshal, but, if necessary, erase it into camp dust.

Shtemenko continues: "Practically, our activity here began with the fact that already on August 24 military

position. All the troops that were retreating in an organized manner from the north were put on the defensive on the Terek, in the foothills of the Caucasus Range, in the Tuapse and Novorossiysk directions. And those units and formations that turned out to be bloodless in the previous battles, lost their controls or weapons, were withdrawn to the rear. On the main Baku

In the direction of August 28, the 58th Army began to form. A consolidated cavalry corps was concentrated in the Kizlyar area.

After we carefully examined the situation, it was decided to create defensive areas of operationally important centers. In total, there were three such districts: Baku Special, Grozny and Vladikavkaz. Their chiefs received the rights of deputy commanders of the armies who defended the approaches to these areas.

An entire infantry division was placed on the defense of the Georgian Military Highway. Its main forces blocked the entrance to the Ordzhonikidze area. Another division from Gori was transferred there.

The Baku direction caused a lot of trouble. When leaving for the place, we found that the construction of defensive lines was proceeding very slowly there. There was clearly not enough strength for this. On September 16, the State Defense Committee, on the proposal of the military (more precisely, Beria), adopted a special resolution on the mobilization of 90 thousand local residents for defensive construction in the regions of Makhachkala, Derbent and Baku daily. After that, things went into full swing. Day and night, trenches, anti-tank ditches were built, and gouges were installed. In addition, on September 29, the Headquarters ordered a number of measures to strengthen the defense here and sent 100 tanks here for the intended purpose ...

A no less disturbing situation developed on the Taman Peninsula and in Novorossiysk ... On September 1, on the basis of the North Caucasian Front, the Black Sea Group of Forces was created there, subordinate to the Transcaucasian Front. A few days later, Lieutenant General I.E. took command of this group. Petrov. The commander of the 47th Army and the entire Novorossiysk defensive region, the Military Council of the Front, proposed the appointment of Major General A.A. Grechko (considers the replacement of the former commander of the 47th Army and a member of the Military Council of the Transcaucasian Front L. My Kaganovich as justified, who claimed that "there was no spirit of confidence at the top of the 47th Army."), and Rear Admiral, the head of the defense of the city of Novorossiysk itself S.G. Gorshkov (in fact, these candidates were chosen by Beria.). This proposal was approved by the Stavka. The results were immediate. On September 10, Soviet troops stopped the enemy in the eastern part of Novorossiysk between cement plants and forced him to go on the defensive.

The main Caucasian ridge was not included in the zone of operations of either the Black Sea or the Northern groups. The 46th Army, which defended it, was supposed to be directly subordinate to the front command. But then a special body appeared at the headquarters of the front, called the "headquarters of the defense forces of the Caucasian ridge." It was headed by General G.L. Petrov from the NKVD. It must be said frankly that it was a completely unnecessary, intermediate instance. In fact, this headquarters replaced the control of the 46th Army.

Things clearly did not go well with the defense of the mountains. The front command exaggerated their inaccessibility too much, for which already on August 15 they paid with the Klukhorsk pass. The Marukh Pass was about to be taken, as a result of which there would be a threat of the Germans going south to the Black Sea. Mistakes made were corrected in the most hasty manner. Urgently formed and sent to the defense

groups of climbers and residents of high mountainous regions, in particular Svans, crossed the passes. There, on the passes, additional forces were pulled up from the bottom of the personnel troops. In the area of Krasnaya Polyana and to the east of it, a large detachment of Colonel Piyashev took up the defense, blocking the enemy's path to the sea. Armed detachments of workers also advanced into the mountains. The entire multinational family of the peoples of the Caucasus rose up against the enemy. On the battle lines and in the rear of the enemy, there was a disastrous struggle for uninvited guests.

I note that all the measures for the defense of the Transcaucasus, taken during the stay of Beria, Shtemenko, a very qualified General Staff officer and forty-five years later considered correct. Sergei Matveyevich did not like only the creation of the headquarters of the NKVD General G.L. Petrov (the rivalry between the two departments played a role here). And the appointment of General K.N. Leselidze Shtemenko did not consider it a mistake. Maybe that's why he gave his last name to the investigators, because Konstantin Nikolayevich died in the 44th, and Shtemenko could not harm him in any way. Also, replace Beria in memoirs with P.I. Bodin was perfectly safe. Pavel Ivanovich, left by the chief of staff of the Transcaucasian Front, on November 1, 1942, together with a group of officers, came under bombardment in the Ordzhonikidze area and the next day died from his wounds (during that bombing, L.M. Kaganovich, a member of the Military Council of the front, was seriously wounded). But Shtemenko had the opportunity to blame all the mistakes and failures on Beria. Marshal Zhukov commemorated Lavrenty Pavlovich in his memoirs, of course, only in black colors. Sergei Matveyevich, however, preferred not to call the former chief of the NKVD by name, but on the other hand he clearly showed the initiates with some details who actually flew with him to the Caucasus. Because knowledgeable people knew, for example, that Colonel V.G. Grachev was Beria's personal pilot.

It turns out that Shtemenko was cunning before the investigators in 1953, when he branded the "enemy of the people" Beria for his treacherous role in the defense of the Caucasus. He was probably afraid that they might accuse Lavrenty Pavlovich of being close and drag him into his case. After all, many military leaders, perhaps not without reason, considered Sergei Matveyevich "Beria's man." Here is the former Chief of the General Staff, Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky in 1976 characterized Shtemenko in a conversation with Konstantin Simonov: "He is a militarily educated person, very hard-working, and not only hard-working, but also capable, energetic, with strong-willed qualities ... When Stalin sent Beria to the Caucasus with an order to save there the situation after the defeat of the Southern Front, Beria asked to recommend which of the workers of the General Staff he should take with him, and we recommended Shtemenko to him as a young and capable staff worker, he took him with him, and Shtemenko was with him for several months. unfortunately, a lot determined both his fate and his behavior. In June 1952, Shtemenko was removed from his post as chief of the General Staff and appointed deputy commander of the Volga Military District, largely because of his closeness to Beria. Stalin feared the strengthening of the influence of the "Lubyansk Marshal" among

military. At the same time, such a strong decline in the military hierarchy did not prevent the election of Sergei Matveyevich a few months later at the Twentieth Party Congress as a candidate member of the CPSU Central Committee. Therefore, it is impossible

regard the elimination of Shtemenko, in whom Stalin apparently retained confidence, as preparation for the elimination of Beria from the political arena. Iosif Vissarionovich did not want to give Lavrenty Pavlovich too much power, but he was in no hurry to send him into oblivion.

But let's get back to the battle for the Caucasus and see how my father's trip to the front was remembered by Sergo Beria, who himself flew with him as a radio operator (perhaps he was the cipher clerk that Shtemenko writes about): "The defense of the Caucasus was most vividly deposited in my memory ... My father was sent there as a representative of the Headquarters, and I ended up in the North Caucasus with a group of officers of the General Staff, being directly subordinated to Sergei Matveyevich Shtemenko ... as the head of the radio station ...

We flew from Moscow on my father's plane. Shtemenko, he was still a colonel then, Lieutenant General Bodin, a few more officers ...

Even in Moscow, a few hours before the departure, my father ordered to collect servicemen of Georgian nationality from different fronts ... - the middle command staff. Say, regimental commanders. These people, my father believed, with their combat experience, excellent knowledge of local conditions in the formation of units that were supposed to defend the Caucasus, were simply irreplaceable ... Even with us, several such officers had already flown ...

We flew through Baku. And here it was not without trouble. The plane caught fire, and only the skill of Colonel Grachev, his father's personal pilot, made it possible to bring down the flames in the air. At night, we landed safely in Tbilisi... Wasting no time, our group went to Mozdok, on the outskirts of which fighting was already going on.

Colonel-General Maslennikov, head of the border troops, deputy people's commissar of internal affairs, was already waiting for my father there. By order of his father, shortly before that, he, along with several border units, was transferred by air to this area, where the border guards, having neither tanks nor anti-tank artillery, were supposed to stand in the way of Kleist's tank army ...

Back in Moscow, my father agreed with Stalin that the units that were once sent to Iran ... would be returned to the Union and used to defend the Caucasus. Separate anti-tank mobile formations from the "Iranian" units were supposed to arrive at the scene in ten days, but this time had to be held out. The forces for real defense ... were clearly not enough.

The father considered the closure of the passes to be a priority. They were immediately blocked by border units and a mountain rifle division ...

All these two weeks, until the Germans were stopped and the situation stabilized, my father was there. And only when he was convinced that the defense was reliable, he left for Novorossiysk ...

An even more alarming situation developed on the Southern Front. Headquarters

front completely lost control of the troops and was demoralized. In agreement with the Headquarters and the GKO, my father immediately dismissed Semyon Budyonny from the post of front commander ...

I saw Budyonny, who, it seemed to me, was in a state of prostration. When his father came to him, he began to convince: "There is no need to protect these tangerine groves, we must leave!" Father, although he knew that as a military leader was Marshal Budyonny, was

amazed. The front commander could not clearly explain where which units were located, who commanded them. When he reported to his father about the situation, he immediately realized that there was nothing more to talk about. Interrupting the conversation, the father began to call commanders of all ranks to him and FIND OUT WHAT was really going on there.

Before my eyes, they made a map of hostilities, and Marshal Budyonny sat on the sidelines with an absent look. It seemed to me that he did not really understand what was at stake ...

At the same time, my father appointed two young commanders as commanders of the armies. Both, as far as I understood then, made a good impression on him with their competence and determination. We are talking about Konstantin Nikolayevich Leselidze (commander of the 46th Army ..) ... and the second nominee of his father, Andrei Antonovich Grechko (commander of the 47th Army, and in mid-October, who led the 18th Army near Novorossiysk, where the future General Secretary L.I. Brezhnev) ...

In the area of Novorossiysk, and the fighting was going on in the city itself, we stayed for a week ... Father used this time with maximum efficiency. I remember one conversation that he had at the headquarters of the Southern Front (probably, in reality - the Black Sea Group of Forces of the Transcaucasian Front.) Immediately upon arrival. Father inquired about the balance of power between the warring parties. Here it turned out that there were quite enough fighters, but ... in the second echelon. Leaked, reported, from the first. Well, anything can happen in a war, but where are the commanders? In a word, some people got it, but they put things in order. "

In general, Sergo Lavrentievich's story does not contradict Shtemenko's testimony. The fact that Beria's predecessors, as they say, "slept through" the passes, is also recognized by Ivan Vladimirovich Tyulenev in his memoirs: "Analyzing now the reasons for the capture of these important passes by the enemy, it should be said that this was a considerable part of the fault of the command and headquarters of the Transcaucasian Front, recklessly who decided that the passes themselves were inaccessible to the enemy. Some of us considered the main task of the troops of the front to be the defense of the Black Sea coast, where the main forces of the 46th Army were deployed. And she, in turn, organized the defense of the passes incorrectly and simply "overslept" them. The enemy had to be met on the slopes of the mountains, and not wait until he rises. Tyulenev himself was well acquainted with Beria, since he commanded the Transcaucasian District in 1938, replacing Yegorov, just at the time when Lavrenty Pavlovich was the first secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia. The appointment of Leselidze also becomes clear - Beria, in the defense of the Caucasus, was going to rely primarily on Georgians, and therefore he selected cadres of Georgian officers who were to be commanded by a Georgian general. There was not only a completely understandable national feeling of Lavrenty Pavlovich, but also a sober calculation. Years of experience

in Transcaucasia he convinced Beria that among the local peoples, it was the Georgians who were relatively more loyal to the Soviet government. Stalin made certain indulgences to his compatriots - he took less manufactured products from Georgia, gave more supplies from centralized funds. As a result, the standard of living here was higher than in Azerbaijan and Armenia, not to mention the mountainous republics of the North Caucasus. In addition, many Georgians were proud

that their countryman became the head of the former Russian Empire. Therefore, there were fewer deserters in the Georgian units than in the Armenian and Azerbaijani ones. Just on the eve of Beria's trip to the Caucasus, on August 20, Stalin gave a directive to the command of the Transcaucasian Front, demanding that 3,767 Armenians, 2,721 Azerbaijanis and 740 representatives of the "Dagestan nationalities" be withdrawn from the 61st Infantry Division and sent to spare parts as unreliable.

When you get acquainted with the materials related to Beria's stay at the front, you pay attention that even during the more than biased investigation of 1953, they could not impute any extrajudicial executions or other illegal repressions to him. Although the formidable Stalinist order No. 227 was already in force at that time, Lavrenty Pavlovich preferred not to shoot the fighters and commanders, but to restore order by more civilized methods. He tried to place suitable people as commanders, to organize measures to strengthen the defense. And there is no evidence that Beria practiced scuffle, which was the sin of so many Soviet generals and marshals.

As for the accusations that Beria, with sabotage intentions, did not give the NKVD divisions under his control to the front, then at the trial in December 53, Lavrenty Pavlovich himself (or a person similar to him) answered the question of the presiding marshal I.S. Koneva: "Why did you, having at your disposal more than 120 thousand people of the NKVD troops, did not allow them to be used for the defense of the Caucasus?" "I affirm that there was no shortage of troops there. The passes were closed. I believe that we have done a lot of work to organize the defense of the Caucasus. I didn't say before why I didn't give the NKVD troops for the defense of the Caucasus. The fact is that the eviction of Chechens and Ingush was supposed.

Well, here one cannot but agree with Beria's reasons. The Red Army, even without the NKVD, had an abundance of troops in the Caucasus, only the troops strove, without getting involved in battles, to quickly retreat to the second echelon. The NKVD divisions were not trained in combat operations at the front against the regular enemy army. Beria, of course, could not say anything about the planned expulsion of the North Caucasian peoples to the commander of the Transcaucasian Front, Tyulenev, since this operation was being prepared in great secrecy. And even without preparations for deportation (postponed, after all, for the 44th year), the NKVD troops had enough things to do in the Caucasus. I had to fight against the partisan detachments of the Ingush and Chechens, as well as other local peoples who did not stop their sorties all the years of Soviet power and saw in the Germans their liberators not only from Stalin, but also from the Russian Empire. In the program documents of the Special Party of Caucasian Fighters, which united 11 peoples of the Caucasus, but operated mainly in Checheno-Ingushetia, the goal was to fight "against Bolshevik barbarism and Russian despotism", the slogan "Caucasus to Caucasians!" (which included

the eviction of Russians and Jews) she was tasked with "ensuring the complete disorganization of the rear, the remnants of the Soviet military in the Caucasus, accelerating the death of Bolshevism in the Caucasus and acting in the name of Russia's defeat in the war with Germany", and subsequently "creating a free fraternal Federal Republic in the Caucasus - a state

fraternal peoples of the Caucasus under the mandate of the German Empire. Even at the very beginning of the war, on July 8, 1941, Beria authorized a military operation "to eliminate Chechen gangs" who had taken refuge in the Hildikharoevsky and Maistinsky gorges of Georgia, with the help of 6 regiments of internal troops, reinforced by several detachments of the NKVD. The insurrectionary movement especially intensified in the summer of 1942, with the German troops approaching the Main Caucasian Range. During the days of Beria's stay in the Caucasus, at the end of August, Chechen detachments liquidated collective farms and Soviet bodies in a number of villages in mountainous Chechnya and entered into battle with military garrisons located in regional centers. In late September - early October, a major uprising broke out in the Vedensky and Cheberloevsky districts, in the preparation of which German paraptists participated. In total, up to 25 thousand rebels operated on the territory of the Chechen-Ingush Republic. By the way, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Checheno-Ingushetia fought against the rebels, the captain of state security S.I. Albogachiev, it seems, is the same one who unsuccessfully tried to force a confession from M.S. Kedrov in August 39th. In September 1943, Albogachiev was suspected of having links with the leader of the rebels and the founder of the Special Party of Caucasian Brothers Hasan Israilov (Terloev), by the way, a graduate of the Communist University of the Workers of the East, and was recalled to the reserve. Albogochiev turned to Stalin with a letter, where he asked "to use me in the most acute area, where the work would be visible to the people's commissar" (i.e., Beria). The letter was sent to Lavrenty Pavlovich with a Stalinist visa. We do not know how Albogochiev was further used in the service and how he reacted to the subsequent deportation of his countrymen, but it seems that he was not repressed.

The Karachays and Balkars also fought against the Soviet power, and in Dagestan it was restless. Under these conditions, Beria was afraid to send units of the NKVD to the front, believing, not without reason, that then a wave of uprisings would flood the North Caucasus. Beria saw the only way to eliminate the insurgent movement in the immediate deportation of Chechens, Ingush, Karachays and Balkars, otherwise the Germans, if they managed to break through the Main Caucasian Range, would have received tens of thousands of fighters - staunch opponents of Soviet power. However, the encirclement of the German grouping in Stalingrad at the end of November 1942 dramatically changed the overall strategic situation in favor of the Soviet Union, including in the Caucasus, which made it possible to delay the deportation.

And how were the events in the Caucasian theater of operations assessed by the German side at the end of August and September 1942, when Beria was there? In the diary of the Chief of the General Staff of the German Land Forces, Colonel General Franz Halder at the front of Army Group A, operating in the Caucasus, during this period, mainly only "local successes" are noted. The only major achievement of the Wehrmacht was the occupation of Novorossiysk. German troops broke into the city on September 6, and by the 10th the front had stabilized on the eastern outskirts of the city in the area of the Oktyabr cement plant. However, the Soviet troops were kept under fire

the city and the Tsemess Bay, which did not allow the Germans to use the Novorossiysk port. The fall of Novorossiysk was

predetermined even before the arrival of Beria. A powerful German-Romanian grouping in 4 divisions with a sufficient number of landing craft hung over the city from the Kerch Peninsula. On August 16-18, German troops moving from Rostov reached Temryuk and Krymskaya station, and on August 23 they took Temryuk. The fall of Novorossiysk was predetermined, but the Germans could not achieve the main strategic goal - to break through into the Transcaucasus. Just on September 9, Hitler dismissed the commander of Army Group A, Field Marshal Wilhelm List, and decided to replace Chief of the General Staff Halder in the near future. This was primarily due to the stop of the offensive in the Caucasus.

In fairness, I emphasize that Beria's mission to stabilize the front was facilitated by the fact that the Germans no longer had the strength to continue the offensive towards Baku oil, since Stalingrad absorbed more and more troops .. Field Marshal List reported to Hitler back in mid-August that "it can't with the available he has the strength and with such extended communications to achieve the operational goal set for him by the High Command - the capture of oil-bearing regions. But, in any case, Lavrenty Pavlovich coped with his task and did not let the Germans go to Baku.

Only in 1944 did Beria have to deal with the long-planned deportation of the North Caucasian peoples. For this police operation, he was awarded the Order of Suvorov, 1st degree. The result for the "repressed peoples" was tragic. Then about 873 thousand Karachais, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Crimean Tatars, as well as Greeks, Bulgarians and Armenians of Crimea were evicted. In total, including the first post-war years, 62 nations and nationalities were repressed. Of these, by October 1945, only 741,500 people remained alive in places of exile in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Hundreds of thousands of Germans from the Volga region, Ukraine and Crimea suffered no less victims, the deportation of which was carried out back in 1941. In total, from the beginning of 1945 to the end of 1950, 288 thousand people died in places of special settlements, and only 197 thousand were born. It should also be taken into account that tens, if not hundreds of thousands of special settlers died in 1941-1944. In total, by October 1948, 2247 thousand people were moved to special settlements in the country, including 1013 thousand Germans, 364 thousand Chechens and Ingush, 57 thousand Karachays, 32 thousand Balkars, 75 thousand Kalmyks, 185 thousand Tatars, Bulgarians, Greeks and Armenians, evicted from Crimea, 81 thousand Meskhitian Turks, Kurds and Khemshins (Muslim Armenians) evicted from Georgia, 97 thousand so-called "OUN" (residents of Western Ukraine), 47.5 thousand Lithuanians and 135 thousand "Vlasovites". In 1949, a stream of special settlers from the Baltic States, Western Ukraine and the Baltic States was added to them, but Beria was no longer directly involved in these deportations.

Beria reported to Stalin about the operation to resettle Chechens and Ingush that 19,000 operatives of the NKVD-NKGB and SMERSH and about 100,000 soldiers and officers of the NKVD troops "drawn from various regions" took part in it. This is where the figures of 120,000 servicemen in the NKVD divisions in the Caucasus in 1942, which appeared during the trial of Beria, probably came from. Meanwhile, Tyulenev, as we remember, spoke only about 15-20 regiments of the NKVD troops, in

which, even taking into account other individual units, there were hardly more than 40-50 thousand soldiers and commanders.

The deportation operation was carried out by Lavrenty Pavlovich in a literate Chekist way. On the eve of it, he told Stalin the main ideas of his plan: "It was reported to the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Mollaev, about the government's decision to evict the Chechens and Ingush and about the motives that formed the basis of this decision. Mollaev shed tears after my message, but pulled himself together and promised to fulfill all the tasks that would be given to him in connection with the eviction. Then, in Grozny, together with him, 9 leading officials from Chechens and Ingush were scheduled and convened, and they were informed about the progress of the eviction of Chechens and Ingush and the reasons for the eviction. We assigned 40 republican party and Soviet workers from Chechens and Ingush to 24 districts with the task of selecting 2-3 people from the local activists for each locality for agitation. A conversation was held with the most influential clergymen in Checheno-Ingushetia B. Arsanov, A. G. Yandarovty and A. Gaysumov, they were called to help through Will and other local authorities.

The eviction begins at dawn on February 23 this year. It was supposed to cordon off areas in order to prevent the population from leaving the territory of settlements. The population will be invited to the gathering, part of the gathering will be released to collect things, and the rest will be disarmed and taken to the places of loading.

The next day, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs reported with satisfaction to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief that "the eviction is proceeding normally. There are no noteworthy incidents. There have been b instances of attempts to resist by individuals who have been thwarted by arrest or by the use of arms. Of those scheduled for seizure in connection with the operation, 842 people were arrested."

Having fulfilled the unenviable role of goats provocateurs leading the herd to the slaughter, religious authorities and representatives of the party and Soviet activists shared the fate of their fellow tribesmen, only a week later on March 1 Beria reported to Stalin: operations."

During the deportation, the troops committed terrible crimes, but Beria preferred not to report them to the Supreme. So, on February 27, 1944, 700 residents of the village of Khaibakh in the Shatoi region were burned alive - women, the elderly and children. They were burned in the stable of the collective farm named after Beria. The action was led by Commissar of State Security 3rd rank Mikhail Maksimovich Gvishiani, father-in-law of the future Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR A. N. Kosygin. Mikhail Maksimovich escaped with the fact that in 1954 he was deprived of the rank of lieutenant general "as discrediting himself during his work in the authorities." And in the 44th, he reported to Beria, whose personal guard he once led: "Only for your eyes. In view of the non-transportability and in order to rigorously complete the operation "Mountains" on time, I was forced to liquidate more than 70,000 inhabitants in the town of Khaibach. Lavrenty Pavlovich approved the actions of his subordinate and made him happy with the good news: "For decisive actions in the course of the eviction of Chechens in the Khaibakh region, you are presented with a government award with an increase in

rank. Congratulations". The current Russian soldiers and officers who carry out the genocide of Chechens during the Second Chechen War have glorious predecessors.

For one Khaibach, Beria, as well as other leaders of the Mountains operation, including the future Minister of Internal Affairs S.N. Kruglov and the future chairman of the KGB I.A. Serov, fully deserved capital punishment. Instead, on July 9, 1945, Lavrenty Pavlovich was awarded the highest military rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union, though not for military victories, but for successes on the economic and punitive front. And Gvishiani for Khaibakh and the eviction of Chechens and Ingush received the military order of Suvorov of the 2nd degree, and Kruglov and Serov - of the 1st degree.

The forced deportations of entire peoples certainly deserve condemnation. However, one should not turn a blind eye to the fact that among some peoples of the USSR, the majority actually supported the German occupiers. This was facilitated by the racial policy of the Nazis. The invaders considered the peoples of the Caucasus, Cossacks, Kalmyks, Tatars, as well as Latvians and Estonians as Aryan peoples. They were not subject to the humiliating status of "subhuman". Moreover, these peoples received the right to create self-government bodies and military formations under post-German control in the occupied territories. The majority of Lithuanians and residents of Western Ukraine, whom the Germans, however, did not consider "Aryans", fought just as actively against the Soviet regime. At the same time, in Lithuania and Western Ukraine it was less developed than in Estonia, Latvia, the North Caucasus and among a number of peoples of the Crimea. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army already in 1942 was fighting the Germans, and the Lithuanian Liberation Army maintained neutrality towards them (the Germans also preferred not to touch the Lithuanian partisans).

The real, but not realized, choice for the peoples of the USSR during the war years was to change one dictatorship for another, which seemed to some less cruel. In this regard, the example of the North Caucasian peoples, who sincerely welcomed Hitler and the Germans as liberators from the age-old Russian-Soviet and Bolshevik yoke, is typical. We must not forget that the Russian Empire was a colonial power. Many of its peoples felt as oppressed and disenfranchised as the peoples of the British and French colonies in Asia and Africa. The peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia, seeing in Soviet power the heir to the empire, did not stop fighting in the 20s and 30s, mainly under Islamic and separatist slogans. It is natural that the Caucasian highlanders met the German troops as their liberators. In fairness, it should be noted that the same Karachays or Balkars who presented Hitler with a golden harness had no idea about Hitler's crimes. Published in Berlin, the newspaper of the North Caucasian collaborators "Ghazavat" came out under the slogan "Allah is above us - He is with us." And this slogan reflected the real feelings of the Caucasian peoples. Similarly, in Italy and France, communist partisans fought and died with the name of Stalin on their lips, ignorant of his crimes. For many North Caucasian peoples, the partisan struggle that flared up with renewed vigor after the start of the war became

natural continuation of the 1930 uprising, brutally

crushed by Soviet troops.

"Ghazavat" published essays on the history of the Resistance to the Soviets in the Caucasus. So, in the issue of August 11, 1943, in the editorial "We will take revenge!" a certain Gobashev asked his comrades-in-arms a rhetorical question: "Shouldn't we take revenge when our native Caucasus during the years of the Bolshevik Yezhovshchina buried 46,000 of his best sons, our brothers and fathers in the NKVD prisons."

In the same issue, N. Derbushev spoke about the "people's hero of Karachai" Kady Bayramukov, endowing the Karachai leader with all conceivable virtues: "In 1922, the Karachai uprising was suppressed, and its leaders and active participants were shot. All the Bairamukov brothers died, except for Kada, who was then 12 years old. Dzhaudai Bayramukov died a hero's death during a shootout with the Bolsheviks in the mountains near Elbrus, and Dobay and Ali were shot in the cellars of the Cheka.

In 1930, collectivization began in Karachay, a new wave of Bolshevik terror swept through the villages. The Karachays revolted again. In the first ranks of the rebels was the young Kady Bayramukov. The rebels courageously resisted, but what could they do against the tanks and planes sent by the Bolsheviks! The uprising was crushed, and again the land of Karachay was stained with the blood of its best sons. By a lucky chance, Kady Bayramukov was not shot, like hundreds of others. He managed to escape to the mountains. For many years, hiding in the mountains, like a hunted wolf, this freedom-loving hero.

In June 1941, joyful news sounded in the mountains of the Caucasus: Germany had begun a war against the Bolsheviks, Germany was extending a hand of fraternal help to the peoples of Eastern Europe oppressed by the Bolsheviks. The villages of Karachay were deserted. Hundreds, thousands of Karachays went to the mountains, and there, under the leadership of Kada Bayramukov, rebel detachments were organized. The largest of these detachments, directly led by Kady, soon grew to 400 men.

Further, when the front was still far away, the Karachay rebels were already waging a courageous struggle against the Bolsheviks, who had to keep numerous garrisons in Karachai. When the front approached the Caucasus Mountains, the actions of the rebels led by Kady Bayramukov became so active that they were able to cut off all retreat routes for the Reds, in particular, the Klukhor Pass (that's why the passes were so quickly captured by the Germans!), Through which several thousand Reds tried to escape to Svaneti. Hundreds of killed commissars (not in pursuance of Hitler's criminal order to liquidate the commissars, but because of the sincere hatred of the local population towards them), thousands of captured Red Army soldiers, large flocks of cattle captured from the retreating Bolsheviks, a huge amount of military equipment and weapons - these were the trophies of the rebels. With the active assistance of the Karachays, the German troops occupied Karachay by a roundabout movement without firing a single shot. Along the paths known only to the sons of the mountains, the German soldiers-liberators entered the villages.

During the stay of the German Kada in Karachai, Bayramukov organized a fight against the Bolshevik gangs hiding in the forests, and many of them were completely destroyed (this time the Slavic population and the encircled Red Army soldiers were partisans ..).

The withdrawal of the German army from the Caucasus began, and the auls of Karachay became empty. Together with the German army, most of the highlanders left, and Kady Bayramukove also left.

Now he leads the Karachay liberation movement. Under his direct leadership, the proud sons of Karachay are preparing to fight the Bolsheviks not for life, but for death.

Under the sacred banner of Gazavat, we will either die or return to our native Karachay, - says Kady Bayramukov. And in his eyes there is an unshakable determination. "Yes, we will return to our villages," his experienced friends echo the leader, who have become under the banner of Ghazavat - fighters of the mountain legion."

Exactly the same events led to the cooperation with the Germans of the bulk of the Balkars. Their struggle was described on the pages of "Gazavat" by an officer of the mountain legion Yab Khalaev, a former Kolyma prisoner. He told before the uprising that broke out on February 17-18, 1930 in the Chegem and Elbrus regions: "The banner of the rebels was "Down with communists and collective farms!", "Long live free life in free Balkaria" ... Selected mountain troops were called to suppress the uprising troops (with the exception of Muslim highlanders) from Rostov-on-Don, Ordzhonikidze and other cities, and only on April 20, 1930, they managed to brutally suppress the rebels. In the Chegem Gorge, near Su-Auzu, 19 Balkar eagles under the command of Kuliev fought for about two weeks against two squadrons of red troops, and only the lack of ammunition defeated them. Separate military groups of Jews - Arkadin, Savitsky, Murat and others, suffering heavy losses in people, continued to fight against partisan detachments. It was possible to disperse the partisan detachments only through cruel mockery of the relatives of the partisans (abreks). The latter, in the name of saving the survivors and eking out a miserable existence of relatives, were forced to temporarily stop the fight and sacrifice themselves. The party commissars, referring to Stalin's article "Dizziness from Success", guaranteed the freedom of the partisans who voluntarily appeared. But they did not fulfill their promise. But it was not possible to subdue the Balkars, the Balkars began to hate the communists, the collective farms and Stalin's "sharp sword" - the GPU. Not grief, but malice oppressed the Balkar eagles, and they diligently prepared for battle. The oath taken at the graves of the fallen sons of Balkaria was carried out honestly by the Balkarian patriots, and especially actively in 1941-42 with the help of the liberation army of Adonis Nshega. The activities of the Balkar partisans - abreks and the entire population of Balkaria are well known to the German command.

The methods of the Chekists and the Red Army in the fight against the mountaineers-partisans were no different from those used by the Germans in the fight against the Belarusian and Ukrainian partisans: hostage-taking and execution of relatives of the rebels, burning of recalcitrant auls. In 1944 and later, the NKVD also acted against the Ukrainians who supported the UPA.

Khalaev gave an example of the death of one such village: "Thousands of Balkars, Kabardians, Karachays and other peoples of the North Caucasus were destroyed by the Bolsheviks in 1941-42 because they wanted Stalin's defeat. In the autumn of 1942, only one

In the Balkarian village of V. Balkaria, the Bolsheviks killed 575 civilians, and only old people, women and children who could not hide in the mountains were killed. Their dwellings were burned to the ground by NKVD gangs. The reason for this bloody orgy was that the inhabitants of this village restored the mosque and prayed in it for the victory of the Germans.

These atrocities pale in comparison to what the special detachments of the NKVD are now doing to the defenseless population in the regions of the North Caucasus. But the main atrocities were yet to come. Then, in August 1943, the rebels of Chechnya and some other regions were still fighting hopelessly. Gazavat cited the testimony of one highlander who defected from the Red Army to the Germans in July 1943, and who had previously observed the agony of the Chechen uprising: "I was in Grozny on June 10, 1943. There is a terrible fight going on. All Chechnya is on fire. Auls day and night are continuously bombarded by Soviet aircraft. All Chechens have been withdrawn from the army and returned to Chechnya. All Chechens are driven into 3 mountainous regions, cordoned off by red troops and doomed to death. Despite the inequality of forces, our valiant sons of the mountains - abrekhs, are waging a desperate struggle for their liberation. It was a prelude to the deportation of Chechens to Kazakhstan in February 1944.

The Karachays and Balkars also did not escape deportation. If in Chechnya, which the German troops never reached, both actual participants in the partisan struggle and innocent civilians were evicted, then in Karachay and Balkaria, those who, at best, remained neutral or even collaborated with the Soviet government. After all, all active collaborators left Balkaria and Karachay together with the retreating German army. By the way, they are still relatively lucky. After the war, the Western allies extradited the Muslims of the Caucasus and the Volga region not as actively as Russians and natives of eastern Ukraine and eastern Belarus. Those who were extradited were either shot or sent to the Gulag for 20 years. According to the English historian Nikolai Tolstoy, "in 1946 there were supposedly about 80,000 Muslims in the West, and it is unlikely that they were forcibly repatriated." Later, many Caucasian Muslims moved to Egypt, Turkey, Syria and other Islamic countries and never returned to their homeland. Perhaps that is why in subsequent years, right up to our time, separatist tendencies among Karachays and Balkars turned out to be less pronounced than among Chechens. After all, many active participants in the Chechen rebel movement ended up in special settlements, where there were still more chances to survive than in forced labor camps. Some partisans managed to hide in the highlands and avoid deportation. As a result, the continuity of the tradition of the struggle for independence was preserved in Chechnya, while in Karachay, Balkaria and Kabarda they were lost to a certain extent.

The Caucasian highlanders, unlike, say, the Ukrainian nationalists, could not even think of orienting themselves towards help not from Germany, but from England and the USA. After all, in the colonies of the British Empire, tens and hundreds of millions of their fellow Muslims also fought for independence. Egyptian President Gamal Aibdel Nasser and his associates from the Free Officers movement were not subsequently blamed for contacts in

years of war with the Axis countries. If the Caucasian peoples had achieved independence, it would hardly be anyone who reproached them with the fact that they

accepted help from the cannibal Hitler. Here we come to the fundamentally insoluble question of the moral choice of individual peoples and citizens of the USSR between Stalin and Hitler. It seems that none of them can by and large be enlisted as either criminals or righteous.

It should be noted that all deportations were approved by the GKO on the proposal of Beria as the head of the NKVD. For example, on May 29, 1944, he proposed to evict the Bulgarians, Armenians and Greeks from the Crimea, motivating this measure by the "active participation" of these peoples in food supplies for the German army and the creation of pro-German police units from representatives of these peoples. Meanwhile, such acts could be imputed to one degree or another to all residents of the occupied territories. Unlike the Crimean Tatars, there is no evidence that among the Armenians, Bulgarians and Greeks there was an increased percentage of collaborators compared to, say, the Russian and Ukrainian population of Crimea. In addition, the most active collaborators, both from among these peoples and the Tatars, managed to evacuate along with the Germans. Nevertheless, on June 2, the State Defense Committee decided to deport Greeks, Bulgarians and Armenians from Crimea.

Formally, it can be said that Beria was the initiator of this and similar repressive decisions of the highest government body. After the full or partial rehabilitation of the "punished peoples", Soviet propaganda began to lay responsibility for these actions on one Lavrenty Pavlovich. However, there can be no doubt that before writing the corresponding presentation, Lavrenty Pavlovich received an oral instruction from Stalin which peoples should be punished.

The leader has already begun to follow the line that he formulated in a toast to the health of the Russian people on May 24, 1945 at a reception in honor of the commanders of the armies and fronts: "I drink, first of all, to the health of the Russian people, because it is the most outstanding nation of all nations belonging to the Soviet Union". The "guilty" peoples were subject to deportation. At the same time, it is striking that those peoples who lived in the strategically important territories of the Crimea and the Caucasus were punished in the first place. These territories were given a special role in the light of the upcoming confrontation with Turkey. It is curious that in a note dated May 29, 1944, Beria emphasized that during the occupation period, Dashnak leaders were actively working among the Crimean Armenians, who supposedly came not only from Berlin, but also from Istanbul. After the victorious end of the Great Patriotic War, Stalin hoped to establish control over the Black Sea straits and take away from Turkey the territories of Armenia and Georgia, ceded to it in 1921.

No less resistance than in the North Caucasus and in the Tatar regions of the Crimea was offered to the Red Army and the NKVD troops in the Baltics. However, there the local population was only partially deported. It can be assumed that there were several reasons for this. In particular, the following circumstance played an important role. Completely evict the titular population of the Union republics, whose entry into the USSR was not recognized by many

states of the world, including STPA, were uncomfortable in every way. In the case of Western Ukraine, complete deportation would mean recognition before the whole world that "voluntary annexation"

inhabitants of this territory to Soviet Ukraine in 1939 was a fiction. In addition, it was impossible to admit that there were no Ukrainians at all in a significant part of the territory of the Ukrainian SSR. An additional factor may have been that in the Baltics and western Ukraine no sharp confrontation with former World War II allies was expected in the near future, and Poland, to the west of these territories, was placed under Soviet control. Therefore, here Stalin decided to take a softer path: deporting only the most active anti-Soviet elements and encouraging the migration of immigrants from Russia and Eastern Ukraine.

In fairness, I will say that sometimes Lavrenty Pavlovich softened the fate of the deportees. So, on October 31, 1944, he approved the proposal of his deputy V.V. Chernyshov and the head of the department of special settlements of the Ministry of Internal Affairs M. Kuznetsov, in some cases, to satisfy the requests of soldiers and commanders of the Red Army for the release of their relatives from special settlements, but at the same time "not to accept wide practice" and act exclusively on an individual basis. Earlier, on August 1, 1944, Beria agreed to release from special settlements, but only after a personal check, Tatars, Armenians, Greeks and Bulgarians who had Russian husbands. But it was a drop in the ocean.

As the outcome of the war became clear and its victorious end approached, Stalin dealt not only with the peoples, but also with individual members of the highest military and political leadership. He gradually began to prepare the ground for the elimination of those who advanced during the war years. Iosif Vissarionovich feared that in the near future they could threaten his undivided power over the country. On December 8, 1944, Stalin, as People's Commissar of Defense, issued a formidable order:

"May 29, 1944 Chief Marshal of Artillery Comrade. Voronov was submitted for approval by the deputy. People's Commissar Martal Zhukov without prior approval from the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command Combat Regulations for the Anti-Aircraft Artillery of the Red Army (two parts).

On October 18, 1944, also without presentation and without a report to the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, comrade. Voronov submitted for the approval of Marshal Zhukov the Combat Charter of the artillery of the Red Army.

Marshal Zhukov, without sufficient verification, without summoning and questioning people from the front, and without reporting to the Headquarters, these charters were approved and put into effect.

The audit showed that these regulations, due to the haste allowed in their approval, have serious gaps, they do not take into account a number of new systems of guns and are not connected with the plan for the adoption of artillery regulations of the Red Army.

The People's Commissariat of Defense proceeds from the fact that the charter is not an order that is valid for a short period of time. The charter is a code of laws for the Red Army for years. Therefore, before approving the statutes, it is necessary to carefully check them with the call of comrades from the front. IN

In this order, the Combat Charter of the Infantry was approved. In the same order

it was necessary to carry out work in the presentation and approval of these charters, so as not to make mistakes and so as not to punish servicemen in vain later because of violation of defective charters.

We have to establish that Comrade. Voronov neglected this method of drafting and submitting statutes for approval, and Marttal Zhukov forgot about it.

In this regard: 1. I cancel orders No. 7bi 77 of 29. \. 44 and No. 209 dated 18. X. 44 of the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR Marshal Zhukov on the approval and implementation of the Combat Regulations for Anti-Aircraft Artillery and the Combat Regulations for the Red Army Artillery Voronov's frivolous attitude to the issue of artillery regulations. 3. I oblige Marshal Zhukov to continue not to be hasty in resolving serious issues.

I order: To view and verify the above charters, form commissions: a) Commission for review and verification of the Combat Charter of Artillery; Bulganin to determine the composition of the commissions and submit it to me for approval.

Send this order to all commanders of fronts (districts), armies, heads of main and central departments and commanders of military branches of the People's Commissariat of Defense.

The point, of course, was not that Voronov, the chief marttal of artillery, out of old friendship, agreed with TS Marshal Zhukov on the accelerated adoption of artillery regulations, and not that the adopted regulations were somehow particularly bad. It is far from a fact that all the shortcomings, if any, were identified and eliminated by specially appointed commissions, and it is not at all necessary that the charters adopted by them turned out to be better than those proposed by Voronov. It was much more important for Stalin to straighten up the "presumptuous marshals" and show the higher command staff, to whom the order was sent, who was the boss in the house. He made it clear to Voronov and Zhukov that, despite all the past merits, he was ready to remove them from their high positions if the slightest arbitrariness was repeated.

Stalin kept Voronov at the head of the artillery of the Soviet Army until 1950, after which he appointed him to the honorary, but meaningless post of president of the Academy of Artillery Sciences. And already in 1946 Zhukov was sent to a not very honorable exile to command the Odessa and Ural military districts.

In the same way, even during the war years, Stalin began to gradually limit the influence of Beria. Already in April 1943, state security was taken away from Lavrenty Pavlovich, which again took shape in a separate people's commissariat headed by Merkulov, and army special departments, which took shape in the SMERSH Main Directorate of Counterintelligence, headed by Abakumov. The latter, especially important in wartime conditions, Stalin subordinated directly to himself, as the people's commissar of defense.

Abakumov, who headed military intelligence throughout the war, any impressive success in the fight against enemy spies. How

evidence published in the appendix of the investigation materials of the activities of the special department of the 7th separate army, for the most part, innocent Red Army soldiers were declared spies, from whom confessions were beaten out by beatings, and then shot. things were better. The "Red Chapel", as the Gestapo conditionally called the Soviet intelligence network in Western Europe, the Germans managed to liquidate by the end of 1942. However, Beria was not to blame for this failure. His predecessor in the leadership of intelligence V.N. Merkulov did not take care of equipping the residency abroad with a sufficient number of radio stations in the pre-war period, relying only on diplomatic channels of communication. It also played a role that Stalin counted on a successful blitzkrieg and hoped that a short break in contacts with agents would not lead to major consequences. In practice, it turned out that after June 22 most of our reconnaissance groups were either deprived of the opportunity to transmit the most valuable information, or were forced to close on the few available radio stations, which, due to extremely intensive work, became easier to find direction. And since the entire network was closed to a few radio points, the failure of one radio operator led to the failure of a large number of agents. Beria himself, according to Sudoplatov, being a professional, would hardly have allowed such a violation of the elementary rules of conspiracy.

The failures in Germany and occupied Europe were more than compensated for by successes in scientific and technical espionage, including atomic espionage, in the allied countries - England and the USA. There, local counterintelligence was focused on fighting German, Italian and Japanese agents and almost did not prevent our residents, who acted under diplomatic cover, from establishing contacts with agents. We must pay tribute to Lavrenty Pavlovich: he very quickly appreciated the importance of intelligence reports on the "uranium problem". This contributed to the appointment of Beria at the end of the war as the head of the Soviet atomic project.

Stalin instructed Lavrenty Pavlovich to oversee this project on December 3, 1944, just five days before the issuance of an order condemning the actions of Voronov and Zhukov. It can be assumed that one of the goals of this action was to weaken Beria's control over the NKVD. Similarly, Yezhov was first appointed "concurrently" People's Commissar of Water Transport, which helped to move Yezhov's loyal people from the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs to the new People's Commissariat and predetermined his fall after only a few months. But in the case of Beria there was a fundamental difference. The nuclear project is not the people's commissariat for water transport, at the head of which you can put at least a politician who has made a mistake, at least one of the personally devoted politicians from the second echelon. The creation of an atomic bomb was the main task that Stalin set for the country after the end of the war. Only the possession of nuclear weapons allowed him to feel "on an equal footing" with the United States. Having headed the project to create an atomic bomb, Beria for some time became the most influential member of the government, the most necessary minister for Stalin. It was not by chance that he was put at the head of the project. Iosif Vissarionovich hoped for administrative

abilities of Lavrenty Pavlovich, on his experience of using prisoners

Gulag and forced scientists from the "sharashka" to solve major national economic problems. And he was in no hurry to send him into oblivion. Beria could hope that until the bomb was made, he would probably not suffer the same fate as Yezhov. But, on the other hand, if the work on the bomb drags on too long, or the tests fail, the heads will not be demolished either.

STALIN IS LOOKING FOR A SUCCESSOR

In October 1945, Stalin unexpectedly went on a long vacation - until mid-December. I believe that Iosif Vissarionovich was greatly impressed by Sergei Eisenstein's film "Ivan the Terrible", where the tsar's illness serves to reveal the true face of the "reactionary boyars". After Stalin disappeared from Moscow for a long time, rumors about his illness and even death began to circulate in the world press. The question of possible successors to the Soviet leader was seriously discussed. On the farm in the Politburo, Iosif Vissarionovich left four of Molotov, Malenkov, Beria and Mikoyan. It was in this order that their rating of former members of the GKO decreased. Molotov was the eldest, followed by Stalin's deputy Malenkov, then Beria, who was still the people's commissar of internal affairs and had already headed the atomic project, and Mikoyan, the people's commissar of foreign trade, who oversaw the civilian sectors of the national economy, closed the list. When Stalin turned not to Molotov, but to the rest of the members of the ruling four, he put Malenkov in the first place in the cipher messages, followed by Beria, and at the end - Mikoyan. Mikoyan's subordinate role is illustrated by one curious fact. At the same time, in the autumn of 1945, armed demonstrations took place in Iranian Azerbaijan, directed against the Shah's government and secretly supported by the Soviet occupation forces. So, the telegrams about the situation in the north of Iran, the head of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, Bagirov, and the commander of the Transcaucasian Military District, General Maslennikov, were addressed to Molotov, Malenkov and Beria, while Mikoyan was not among the recipients.

Stalin in Sochi was regularly delivered reports prepared by the Secret Department of TASS under the heading "top secret" from the foreign press, devoted to rumors about the possible illness of the Soviet leader and his alleged successors. So, on October 9, according to information from Rome, "a number of Italian newspapers published reports under screaming headlines about the "serious illness" of Generalissimo Stalin ... " Stalin is seriously ill ... "Stalin has only a few months to live." Iosif Vissarionovich was going to live a long time and read with interest the message of the London correspondent of the French Paris Press on October 10: "The news of Marshal Stalin's departure from Moscow for rest is interpreted here as confirmation of rumors about his illness. There was a rumor in Potsdam that he was ill with angina pectoris and intended to go to the Caucasus. The question of his successor raises an important problem. It is not specified who will perform his duties during the vacation. But even during the London Conference, it was claimed that Molotov, Zhdanov and Beria showed more straightforwardness than Stalin.

The American "Chicago Tribune" on October 11, citing diplomatic circles in London, argued that "a fierce behind-the-scenes struggle for power is taking place in Moscow between

Marshal Zhukov and Foreign Minister Molotov, who are trying to take Stalin's dictatorial position. Moscow radio announced that Stalin had left the Kremlin for a "short vacation". This was Stalin's first vacation since the start of the war with Germany, and the first vacation he had ever taken. In fact, Stalin rested quite often, and it was not a big secret. But for the first time Stalin's vacation was publicly announced by Soviet radio, and this circumstance created a stir in the West.

The correspondent of the Chicago Tribune noted that "the diplomatic representatives who were present at the Potsdam Conference report that Stalin is very ill. This summer, there were reports in Paris that Stalin, due to heart disease, might leave his post. Zhukov's ambitious plans to become a dictator are reportedly backed by the army, while Molotov is backed by the communist party. Stalin's sixty-year-old age is one of the factors for the current maneuvers of his successors.

And in the Mexican newspaper "Excelsior" in connection with rumors about the illness of the Kremlin leader on October 4, an article appeared "If Stalin were Truman, he would have done away with the communists." Under this heading, a message was placed about a press conference by American Admiral William Stanley, the former ambassador to Moscow. He claimed that he once made it clear to Stalin: "Communist agitators in the United States bear a great responsibility for the bad attitude of Americans towards Russia." "Admiral Stanley said further," Excelsior wrote, "that Stalin asked him: 'Are these agitators citizens of the United States?' I told him that a 'Don't you have police units in the United States?' Marshal Stalin kept asking me. I told him that there is. 'And the police carry firearms?' Stalin asked. I answered him again in the affirmative. 'In that case,' Stalin said, 'why don't you kill your revolutionaries? That's what I did.' Surely Lavrenty Pavlovich also read this message and, like other members of the 'four', he perfectly understood that he could easily be the next in a long line of 'executed revolutionaries'.

On October 12, TASS brought new rumors. In Stockholm it was suspected that Stalin had a liver disease, and in Ankara there was a report that he "allegedly died."

In England, the Daily Express newspaper published a series of articles by its correspondent Alaric Jacob, who had just returned from Moscow, summarized in a TASS report on October 15: "Jacob asks the question: who will be Stalin's successor? According to him, the hardliners believe that if it were known who rules Russia while Stalin is on vacation in his native Georgia, then this could be the key to the mystery - who will be his successor. Jacob believes that this successor will be a little-known person with goatee, reddish hair and freckles, named Nikolai Bulganin, who probably took over the main part

Stalin's daily work. When Stalin finally retires, Jacob continues, it seems inevitable to me that Russia will rule the committee. The number five would have been practical in terms of its composition, as it turned out when Stalin, Beria, Mikoyan, Kaganovich and

Voroshilov constituted the Defense Council, which directed all efforts. From such a committee of five a new leader could emerge. But it will be a slow process. After Lenin's death, there was an interregnum, and it takes a long time to "inflate the reputation" of any person, no matter how talented, in order to take the place of a leader who, more than Lenin, is considered the father of the republic and the organizer of victory. One can only speculate, but there are 5 people who are likely to be able to compete: Molotov, Bulganin, Antonov, Mikoyan, Zhdanov. One thing we can be sure - a young and ardent genius will not fill the vacancy. I believe that the Soviet Union after so much stress has become the most stable society in the world, adhering to a proven and authentic doctrine, as they call "Marxism-Leninism" Such a society does not open any horizons for a new Alexander the Great. The new world will definitely not be conquered.

Stalin has not ceased to be a revolutionary, but he and his followers are supporters of the strength of example, and not of barricades, which require both hot and young blood. Stalin's successors will be a group of people of middle age and good will."

Reading this, Stalin grinned. With Bulganin, the Englishman hit the sky with his finger. Iosif Vissarionovich never considered the "man with a goatee" as one of his successors. And even the composition of the GKO Jacob did not really know. In his article, Malenkov, who is almost unknown abroad, dropped out of the top leadership. Jacob also did not consider Beria a possible successor to Stalin. Meanwhile, it was Malenkov and Beria who at that moment, along with Molotov, were the most influential members of the Politburo. And to hope that Stalin now relies only on the "power of example" could only be a person who did not understand anything about the nature of Soviet power. A few years will pass, and the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, the blockade of Berlin, the victory of the communists in China and the war in Korea dispelled the last illusions in the West that the Soviet Union had settled down, and Stalin had stopped dreaming of the laurels of Alexander the Great or Genghis Khan.

The hype in the foreign press has already begun to annoy Joseph Vissarionovich a little. He decided that the game had dragged on a little and was becoming dangerous for the prestige of the country. And on October 18 he agreed to receive the American Ambassador Averell Harriman in Sochi "on the 24th, 25th or 26th of this month according to Harriman's choice." He was supposed to convey the message of President Truman, but the message itself was, first of all, a pretext to find out the true state of health of the Generalissimo.

Meanwhile, articles with political portraits of possible Stalin's successors continued to arrive. On October 19, a TASS message with an article by Karl Evang, which appeared in the Norwegian Arbeiderbladet and dedicated to Molotov, landed on Joseph Vissarionovich's desk. The author visited Moscow in 1944 and met with Vyacheslav Mikhailovich. Evang had a real eulogy:

"Molotov is, as it were, the second citizen of the Soviet Union after Stalin. The reasons for this should not be sought in his official position, but rather in the fact that he himself gradually gained great authority. Many, however, believed that he shared second place with Kalinin. Molotov's strong position in his own

country and the great confidence in him on the part of his people cannot be attributed to his remarkable performance as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. It is also rooted in his many years of activity in the revolutionary movement.

Stalin was alarmed that the head of the Soviet foreign policy department was being praised in the "bourgeois press". Publications of this kind contributed to the subsequent disgrace of Vyacheslav Mikhailovich

On the same day, October 15, the Swedish Nurrlands Social Democrats also asked about Stalin's successor: "Until now, Stalin has dominated everything so definitely that there was no place for any significant personality to manifest his

values.

Among the many shortcomings of a dictatorship is that under it no rival is allowed to raise his head. Stalin, like Hitler, removed everyone from the path - both those who interfered with him and those who could be thought that they could interfere with him. So did his Russian predecessors, from Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great.

Roosevelt is gone, Churchill is out of the game. Despite this, there was no particular concern to find suitable successors for them. But here there is a difference between democracy and dictatorship. As in England, so in the United States, by virtue of the democratic order, the elected deputies were already at the ready. It is possible that the supposed change of faces of Russian politics will take place quietly and painlessly. Tsarism fell because it had lost its foundation and was unable to protect the interests of the country either in wartime or in peacetime. Stalinism withstood the test during the war, and, in all likelihood, it will hold out in peacetime even without Stalin, if he were not."

Beria, like Stalin, carefully read this article. After all, he could easily be among those whom the leader decides to expend if he chooses another successor. But, of course, Lavrenty Pavlovich did not assume that in eight years the most painful change of power would be for himself. He, the only one of Stalin's heirs, will have to pay with his life for trying to reform the country. Other heirs preferred to live on the capital bequeathed by Stalin, without advertising this circumstance.

On October 23, a radio interception of a French radio was delivered to Stalin from Washington: "In some circles it is believed that if the head of the Soviet government decides to leave the official leadership of Soviet politics, it is possible that Marshal Zhukov will be his successor. Therefore, Zhukov's expressed desire to visit the United States before the end of this year caused numerous comments. On the same day, Roshna Churchill, a correspondent for the London Daily Mail, stated: "There is a struggle for power between the marshals of the Red Army, a struggle over who will inherit the Stalinist leadership. Zhukov, who is a "party general", is given preference." She also wrote about

"a crisis in the high command environment and a fairly common desertion among the rank and file. It is believed that at least 3,000 Russians deserted in Vienna and 10,000 in Berlin."

As you know, at the insistence of Stalin, Marshal Zhukov was forced to refuse a trip to the United States at the beginning of October at the invitation of General Eisenhower. Iosif Vissarionovich, unlike Western politicians, did not at all want to see Zhukov as his successor. The responses of the foreign press, emphasizing that Zhukov had the support of the army, convinced Stalin even more of the need to hold back the "Marshal of Victory". Joseph Vissarionovich did not want the state he created after his death to degenerate into an ordinary dictatorship. Stalin dreamed that if he did not have time to make the last leap to world domination, his successor would be able to do it. In the USSR, the dictatorship was to be maintained not by the army, but by ideas, albeit personified in the personality of the leader. Only the idea justified in the eyes of the masses suffering and deprivation for the sake of conquering the whole world - under the banner of the "proletarian revolution".

Upon his return from vacation, Stalin began to gradually remove Zhukov from the real leadership of the army. As the daughter of Marshal Era testifies, "at the end of 1945, over my father's head, the clouds began to thicken. He was not invited to the military conference convened in Moscow. At this meeting, Stalin said that Zhukov, they say, downplays the role of the Headquarters and attributes all the credit to himself. Even then, the military leaders who were present did not come out in defense of their comrade-in-arms, which later had the most gloomy continuation. Convinced that there was no organized opposition among the military, Stalin in June 46 at a meeting of the Main Military Council removed Zhukov from the post of commander-in-chief of the ground forces and sent him to command the Odessa district.

But back to Sochi. Stalin's meeting with Harriman on October 26 stifled rumors of the generalissimo's serious illness for a couple of weeks. The American ambassador the next day declared that Stalin "is in good health and the rumors about his illness have no basis." However, after Stalin did not appear on Red Square during the traditional parade on November 7, rumors about the disease flared up with renewed vigor.

Important events took place before the second wave of rumors. By that time, the reform of the power structures had already been decided. Beria had to leave the post of People's Commissar of Internal Troops in order to concentrate on the atomic project. The main punitive functions were planned to be concentrated in the new Ministry of State Security, where internal troops and the main operational units soon moved from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. V.N. Merkulov showed himself to be a weak leader and lost the trust of both Stalin and Beria. Vsevolod Nikolaevich was not accustomed to any kind of independent work. He headed the NKGB only for the last two years of the war, when the main punitive functions were transferred to SMERSH, but Stalin still expressed dissatisfaction that Merkulov had almost completely stopped the fight against the Trotskyists. For the new post-war MGB, Vsevolod Nikolayevich was in no way suitable. Lavrenty Pavlovich hoped that he would remain in charge of the government of the MGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Beria and Malenkov hoped that these ministries

people will lead them. They planned to appoint S.N., close to Georgy Maksimilianovich, to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Kruglov, and at the MGB - close to Lavrenty Pavlovich V.S. Ryzasny. The State Security Department was of key importance for the political situation in the country. Therefore, on October 31, Beria and Malenkov asked in a special cipher

Stalin about the new appointment of his protégé: "We present for your consideration candidacies to strengthen the leadership of the KGB. Ryasny V.S., who is currently the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, can be named as the first candidate. Ryasnoy in the first two years of the war was the head of the KGB (in reality - the NKVD.) of the Gorky region. From this work, in July 1943, he was nominated and appointed People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. Before the war, Ryasnoy was in operational work in the organs of the State Security Service for four years, and was taken to work as a Chekist from party work (secretary of the district committee of the Komsomol of the Stalingrad region). We consider it possible to recommend Ryasny as the First Deputy People's Commissar of State Security in order to approve him as People's Commissar in 1-2 months.

As other candidates for work as deputy people's commissars of state security, we consider it necessary to name the following most capable and proven security officers with experience in local regional work: Bogdanov N.K. - People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Kazakh SSR, Zhuravlev M.I. - Head of the NKVD in Moscow and the Moscow Region, Gorlinsky N.D. - Commissioner of the NKVD and KGB for Estonia, and before that, head of the KGB department for the Krasnodar Territory.

If you approve these candidacies, then we will talk with the comrades mentioned and present a draft decision."

On the same day, Beria asked permission to fly to Sochi, hoping to convince Stalin to accept Ryasny's candidacy. But Iosif Vissarionovich refused to accept the chief of the NKVD. Stalin already had his own candidacy for the post of head of the MGB - the head of SMERSH, Abakumov. Ryasny, one might say, was lucky. If he had become the Minister of State Security, he would almost certainly have ended the same way as Abakumov. Probably, other Chekists listed in the cipher message of Beria and Malenkov would have ended badly if Stalin had accepted the offer of Lavrenty Pavlovich. And so everyone lived to retire. Ryasnoy nevertheless became Deputy Minister of State Security, but only in February 52, during the period of Beria's new rise. In the future, Vasily Stepanovich was lucky not to end up in the same dock with his former patron.

While the question of the future leadership of the MGB was being decided in a completely different way than Beria had planned, a discussion about Stalin's imaginary illness flared up with renewed vigor. The latter was more and more annoyed by the behavior of Molotov, who, in the opinion of Joseph Vissarionovich, made too big concessions to the Western allies. On November 4, a Politburo resolution was adopted condemning Molotov for "the manner of separating himself from the government and portraying himself as more liberal and compliant than the government." The reason was the reckless consent of Vyacheslav Mikhailovich that in the Pacific Commission decisions were not made unanimously, but by a majority of votes. This was unprofitable for the USSR, since the United States and its allies had a solid majority in the commission. Molotov promised not to make such mistakes in the future.

But Stalin's patience was overwhelmed by the publication in Pravda on November 9, with the approval of Molotov, of Churchill's speech in the House of Commons. The former British prime minister confessed his love for Stalin and the Soviet people: "I must first express the feeling that, as I am sure, lives in the heart of everyone, namely the feeling of deep gratitude that we owe to the noble Russian people. The valiant Soviet armies, after being attacked by Hitler,

shed their blood and endured immeasurable torment until absolute victory was achieved. Therefore ... the deep desire of this chamber, and this chamber speaks on behalf of the English nation, is that the feelings of comradeship and friendship that have developed between the English and Russian peoples should not only be preserved, but also systematically developed.

Speaking of com. Stalin, Churchill said: "I personally cannot feel anything other than the greatest admiration for this truly great man, the father of his country, who ruled the fate of his country in times of peace and a victorious defender in time of war. Even if strong disagreements should arise between us and the Soviet Government on many political aspects - political, social, and even, as we think, moral - then such a mood should not be allowed in England that could disrupt or weaken these great ties between our two peoples, ties that make up our glory and poverty in the period of recent terrible convulsions.

The next day, Stalin burst into a threatening message to the four: "I consider it a mistake to publish Churchill's speech praising Russia and Stalin. Churchill needs this praise in order to calm his bad conscience and disguise his hostile attitude towards the USSR, in particular, to disguise the fact that Churchill and his students from the Labor Party are the organizers of the Anglo-American-French bloc against the USSR. By publishing such speeches we help these gentlemen. We now have quite a few responsible workers who are delighted with the praises of the Churchills, Trumans, Byrnes, and, on the contrary, become discouraged by unfavorable reviews from these gentlemen. Such moods I consider dangerous, as they develop in us servility to foreign figures. Pleasing to foreigners must be fought hard. But if we continue to publish lengthy speeches, we will instill servility and servility by doing so (that's when that keyword seems to have first appeared!). I'm not talking about the fact that Soviet leaders do not need praise from foreign leaders. As for me personally, such praises only jar

me".

Molotov again admitted his mistakes and repented. Meanwhile, new foreign articles about his imaginary illness were delivered to Stalin. In particular, the Daily Mail on November 12 wrote, with reference to "well-informed Finnish circles," that "Stalin, in a closed letter deposited with the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, personally named Zhdanov his successor." At the same time, it was stated that Zhdanov, who was then in Helsinki as chairman of the Allied Control Commission for Finland, "is the same anonymous,

what Stalin was like when Lenin died" and that "after Beria, Zhdanov enjoys the broadest powers in the Soviet security system."

The main source of rumors about Stalin's illness and his possible successors was the Moscow correspondent of the Daily Herald. On December 5, Iosif Vissarionovich again attacked Vyacheslav Mikhailovich: "Three days ago I warned Molotov by phone that the NKVD press department had made a mistake by missing

the correspondence of the newspaper "Daily Herald" from Moscow, which sets out all sorts of fables and slanderous fabrications about our government, about the relationship between members of the government and about Stalin. Molotov answered me that he believed that foreign correspondents should be treated more liberally and that correspondence could be passed without special strictness. I answered that it is harmful for our state. Molotov said that he would immediately give orders to restore strict censorship. Today, however, I read in the TASS telegrams the correspondence of the Moscow correspondent of the New York Times, which was let through by the press department of the NKVD, in which all sorts of slanderous things about the members of our government are stated in a more rude form than was the case at one time in the French tabloid press. To Bolotov's question about this, Molotov replied that a mistake had been made. I do not know, however, who exactly made the mistake. If Molotov ordered three days ago to impose strict censorship, and the NKVD press department did not comply with this order, then the NKVD press department must be held accountable. If Molotov forgot to order, then the NKVD press department had nothing to do with it and Molotov must be held accountable. I ask you to take care of this matter, since there is no guarantee that the NKVD press department will not again let through a new libel against the Soviet government. I think that there is no need for us to refute the libels published in the French press through TASS if the NKVD press department itself passes such libels from Moscow abroad.

The next day, at the suggestion of Molotov, the four reported that the switchman was to blame for everything - the deputy head of the press department, Gorokhov, who did not attach due importance to the ill-fated telegram. Here Stalin broke through. In addition, on December 4, TASS reported the content of an article by Moscow correspondent Randolph Churchill (son of the Conservative leader) about the USSR government, which was previously censored and now published in the Daily Telegraph and Morning Post. It "declares that the 13 members of the Politburo of the Communist Party "represent the true and real government of Russia. Zhdanov, Malenkov, Andreev and Beria, - writes Randolph Churchill, - are more powerful figures than Molotov, and it is from among them that Stalin's successor is likely to emerge.

About A.A. Andreeva, the correspondent hit the sky with his finger. Just shortly before this, on November 10, Stalin informed the four that, due to illness, Andrei Andreyevich could not remain Commissar of Agriculture for a long time. But Joseph Vissarionovich took into account the thoughts of Churchill Jr. about Molotov and other potential successors, soon pushing the people's commissar for foreign affairs into the shadow and raising Zhdanov.

All the growing rumors about the illness and even death of the Soviet leader eventually began to greatly annoy Stalin. Molotov, he began to suspect of excessive compliance with the British and Americans in order to please them and thereby increase the chances of being recognized as Stalin's heir. On December 5, Iosif Vissarionovich, in a cipher addressed to Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich and Beria, attacked Vyacheslav Mikhailovich: "Three days ago I warned Molotov by phone that the NKVD press department had made a mistake by missing the correspondence of the Daily Herald newspaper from Moscow, where all sorts of fables and slanderous fabrications are expounded about our government, about the relationship between members of the government, and about Stalin. Molotov answered me that he thought he should

to treat foreign correspondents more liberally and it would be possible to skip correspondence without special strictness. I answered that it is harmful for our state. Molotov said that he would immediately give orders to restore strict censorship. Today, however, I read in the TASS telegrams the correspondence of the Moscow correspondent of the New York Times, which was let through by the press department of the NKVD, in which all sorts of slanderous things about the members of our government are stated in a more rude form than was the case at one time in the French tabloid press. question to Molotov about this, Molotov replied that a mistake had been made. I do not know, however, who exactly made the mistake. If Molotov ordered three days ago to impose strict censorship, and the NKVD press department did not comply with this order, then the press department must be held accountable NKVD If Molotov forgot to order, then the press department of the NKVD has nothing to do with it and Molotov must be held accountable. I ask you to deal with this matter, since there is no guarantee that the press department of the NKVD will not again pass a new libel on the Soviet government. I think that there is no need for us to refute the libels published in the French press through TASS if the NKVD press department itself passes such libels from Moscow abroad.

The next day, at the suggestion of Molotov, the four reported that the switchman was to blame for everything - the deputy head of the press department, Gorokhov, who did not attach due importance to the ill-fated telegram. Here Stalin broke through. On December 6, Stalin turned only to Malenkov, Beria and Mikoyan, ignoring Molotov: "I received your coded message. I find it completely unsatisfactory. It is the result of the passivity of the three, on the one hand, and the sleight of hand of the fourth member, i.e., Molotov, on the other. Whatever you write there, you cannot deny that Molotov read in the TASS telegrams both the Daily Herald correspondence and the New York Times report and the Reuters report. Molotov had read them before me, and could not fail to notice that the libels against the Soviet government contained in these reports would be harmful to the prestige and interests of our state. However, he did not take any measures to put an end to the outrage until I intervened in this matter. Why didn't he take action? Is it because Molotov considers such libels to appear in the order of things, especially after he made a promise to foreign correspondents about a liberal attitude towards their correspondence? None of us has the right to single-handedly decide on a change in the course of our policy. And Molotov appropriated this

right. Why, on what basis? Is it because libels are included in the plan of his work?

When you sent me the cipher, you must have expected to gloss over the question, slap the switchman Gorokhov on the cheeks, and end the matter there. But you were mistaken, just as in history people have always been mistaken who tried to gloss over the issue and usually achieved the opposite results. Before your cipher, I thought that we could confine ourselves to reprimanding Molotov. Now this is no longer enough. I was convinced that Molotov did not really value the interests of our state and the prestige of our government, if only to gain popularity among certain foreign circles. I can no longer consider such a comrade as my first deputy.

I am only sending this code to you three. I did not send it to Molotov, because I do not believe in the conscientiousness of some people close to him. I

I ask you to call Molotov to me, read this telegram of mine to him in full, do not send copies to him.

After such a telegram, an arrest could well follow. All participants in the drama understood this. Malenkov, Beria and Mikoyan were already anticipating that the four would turn into three, and the main of the potential heirs would share the fate of Zinoviev and Bukharin. On December 7, the troika telegraphed to Stalin: "Molotov was summoned to his place, the telegram was read to him in full. Molotov, after some thought, said that he had made a bunch of mistakes, but considered it unfair to distrust him, shed a tear.

We, for our part, told Molotov about his mistakes: We reminded Molotov of his major mistake in London, when at the Council of Foreign Ministers he surrendered the positions won by the Soviet Union in Potsdam, and yielded to the pressure of the Anglo-Americans, agreeing to discuss all peaceful treaties composed of 5 ministers (with the participation of France and China). When the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks obliged Molotov to correct this mistake, he, referring without any need to instructions from the government, behaved in such a way that in the eyes of foreigners it turned out that Molotov was for a compliant policy, and the Soviet government and Stalin were uncompromising.

We gave Molotov another example, when he opposed himself to the Soviet government, expressing to Harriman his personal compliant and disadvantageous position for us on the question of voting in the Far Eastern Commission ...

We told Molotov that Stalin's intervention was necessary for him, Molotov, to pay attention to and react to the vile fabrications spread about the Soviet government by Reuters, with reference to the Paris agency and its Moscow correspondent, and that even after this instruction, Molotov ignored the slanderous telegrams from the Moscow correspondents of the Daily Herald and the New York Times. Stalin's intervention was needed again, although Molotov himself could and should have responded in a timely manner.

We pointed out to Molotov that he had acted incorrectly in agreeing at a banquet on November 7 to receive Churchill's son, who at that time was in Moscow as a newspaper correspondent and wanted to be interviewed by Molotov. The reception of Churchill's son did not take place, as we spoke out against it.

Finally, we told Molotov that all the mistakes he had made in the last period, including the mistakes in questions of censorship, were on the same plane of the policy of concessions to the Anglo-Americans, and that in the eyes of foreigners the opinion was emerging that Molotov had his own policy, different from the policy of government and Stalin, and that it is possible to work with him, Molotov.

Molotov told us that he had made many mistakes, that he had read vile fabrications about the Soviet government before Stalin, that he was obliged to respond to them, but did not do this, that he realized his London mistakes only in Moscow.

As for your reproach against the three of us, we consider it necessary to say that in our reply yesterday we proceeded from your instruction in cipher of December 5 to find out who exactly

made a mistake on a specific fact with the omission of telegrams from the Moscow correspondent of the New York Times, and also to check the correctness of the Reuters report of December 3. This was done by us and reported to you. Maybe we have not done everything, but there can be no question of glossing over the issue on our part.

Vyacheslav Mikhailovich felt that he was about to be declared a seasoned English spy, and rushed to repent in full. Having shed a stingy Narkom tear in front of his colleagues in the collective leadership, on December 7 he sent an eloquent telegram to Stalin: "I got acquainted with your encryption in the name of Malenkov, Beria, Mikoyan. I think that I made serious political mistakes in my work. Among such mistakes is the recent manifestation of false liberalism in relation to Moscow inkors. I read the telegram summaries of the incorres, as well as TASS, and, of course, I had to understand the inadmissibility of telegrams, such as the telegram of the Daily Herald correspondent, etc. states. I see that this is my gross, opportunistic mistake that harmed the state. I also acknowledge the inadmissibility of the fact that I smeared my screw for letting through the hostile Incorovian telegrams by shifting this blame to secondary workers.

Your encryption has been verified by deep distrust of me, as a Bolshevik and a person, which I accept as the most serious party warning for all my future work, wherever I work. I will try to earn your trust, in which every honest Bolshevik sees not just personal trust, but the trust of the party, which is dearer than my life.

And following the repentant telegram, a message came that Molotov had succeeded in convincing the Western partners to hold the next meeting of foreign ministers in Moscow on December 15 as part of a troika, that is, without the participation of not only China, but also France. Stalin immediately relented. He was also reassured by the fact that Molotov shed tears, in a repentant telegram he directly made it clear that his life was in the hands of the leader, and did not try to justify himself. This means that he does not have a core in his soul, a comrade-in-arms has broken down, and he will never dare to oppose the leader in order to bring his entry into the inheritance closer. But the trio Malenkov, Beria, Mikoyan, on the contrary, disappointed Stalin. They are ready to indiscriminately decry almost all the foreign policy achievements of the USSR, forgetting

that not only the head of the NKVD was involved in them, but, first of all, Joseph Vissarionovich himself. And they refuse to admit their mistakes.

Therefore, Stalin replied to the troika on December 8 with a short, annoyed cipher: "I received your cipher of December 7th. The encryption makes an unpleasant impression due to the presence of a number of clearly false provisions in it. In addition, I do not agree with your interpretation of the question on the merits. Details later in Moscow.

But the Secretary General did not wait for the return to the capital, and on the night of December 8 to 9 he sent a long cipher message, first entitled "For the Four." But then the title was corrected to "Molotov for the Four." Trust in Vyacheslav Mikhailovich was partially restored. The big thing is to cry in time.

Stalin wrote: "Analyzing the events of foreign policy during the period from the London conference of five ministers to the upcoming conference of three ministers in Moscow, we can come to the following conclusions:

We have won the fight on the issues discussed in London thanks to our perseverance. The three ministerial conference in Moscow signifies the retreat of the United States and England from their positions in London, since this conference is a conference without the involvement of China on European issues and without the involvement of France on Balkan issues. That is, thanks to our perseverance, we have now achieved what I could have achieved in London.

We won the fight in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia. This is evidenced by the results of elections in these countries. If we hesitated in questions about these countries and did not show restraint, we would certainly lose the fight.

At one time you succumbed to pressure and intimidation on the part of the United States, began to hesitate, adopted a liberal course towards foreign correspondents, and betrayed your own government for reproach to these correspondents, hoping to appease the United States and England in this way. Your calculation was, of course, naive. I was afraid that with this liberalism you would frustrate our policy of steadfastness and thus let our state down. It was at this time that the entire foreign press shouted that the Russians could not stand it, they had yielded and would make further concessions. But the case helped you, and you turned in time to the politics of stamina. It is obvious that in dealing with such partners as the STLA and England, we cannot achieve anything serious if we begin to succumb to intimidation, if we show hesitation. To achieve anything from such partners, you need to arm yourself with a policy of perseverance and endurance.

The same policy of steadfastness and endurance should guide us in our work at the forthcoming conference of three ministers."

This telegram made it clear to the four that Molotov was still part of the collective leadership.

But the fabrications in the foreign press about Stalin's illness continued. On December 10, Iosif Vissarionovich received a TASS message about another publication of the tabloid newspaper Courier de Paris, which claimed that "Stalin was the victim of a love drama. It is known that Stalin's secret has existed for two months now. According to some reports, he allegedly died. Other information concerned a serious internal conflict. Actually the truth

immeasurably simpler. According to some Russians recently arrived from Moscow. Stalin turned out to be just a victim of a love drama. You can be a demigod without ceasing to be human. Stalin had a relationship with a famous Russian artist. His wife, during an explanation with him, in a fit of jealousy, shot him at point-blank range with a revolver. The seriously wounded Stalin was first treated in the greatest secrecy in Moscow, and then, when his condition allowed, they were transferred to the Black Sea coast, where he is now recovering. The authenticity of this story is confirmed, apparently, by the fact that censorship of foreign correspondents' messages has been significantly increased since the time of Vladyka's illness.

Russia".

Stalin understood: the game must end. He informed Truman in response to his message that he would meet with Secretary of State Byrnes during the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference in Moscow. December 18th. Iosif Vissarionovich left Sochi.

He achieved his goal, albeit at the cost of some loss of prestige. It turned out that none of the first team of potential Diadochi, who made up the highest echelon of power during the war years, is yet suitable for the role of an independent state leader. Stalin reasoned something like this. Molotov, of all members of the Politburo who most often meets with foreign politicians, is prone to concessions and, what good, after his death, Stalin, the "Iron Curtain" can lift. Therefore, the influence that Vyacheslav Mikhailovich enjoyed in the pre-war and war years, he never regained. Stalin gradually pushed him away from the real levers of power, and on the eve of his death he was going to fasten his old ally to the process of "killer doctors", but he did not have time. Also close to Molotov, Mikoyan forever lost the leader's disposition and henceforth played only a purely secondary role.

However, the other two members of the four, Malenkov and Beria, showed themselves during this time to be complete opportunists. Stalin was afraid that after his death they would come to an agreement with the "bourgeois West" and would not preserve the ideals of the "proletarian revolution" and the victory of communism throughout the world. Therefore, although soon, in March 1946, Georgy Maksimilianovich and Lavrenty Pavlovich became full members of the Politburo, but their real weight in the state has decreased. Malenkov was accused of negligence in connection with the case of the aviators and went into short-term exile to manage the work of the Central Asian Bureau of the Central Committee. Beria was forced to concentrate entirely on the atomic project, having ceased to oversee the security agencies. The MGB was headed not by Ryasnoy, who was close to him, but by Stalin's protege, Abakumov. Iosif Vissarionovich listened to the opinion of the foreign press and turned his attention to the "anonymous" Zhdanov. Since Andrei Aleksandrovich is compared in the West with him, Stalin, as he was after Lenin's death, there is hope that Zhdanov will continue the right course and will not capitulate to England and the United States. In addition, his son Yuri is married to Stalin's daughter Svetlana. Decided! The Leningrad team led by Zhdanov, who took on the first violin part in the fight against the "rootless

cosmopolitan."

By the way, Lavrenty Pavlovich also had an ambitious idea to intermarry with the leader. Between Sergo Beria and Svetlana at one time something like an affair began. Sergo himself recalled how he once fired Stalin's daughter with a gun, to which Lavrenty Pavlovich became very angry with him, remembering how Nadezhda Alliluyeva shot herself. Either because of this incident, or for some other reason, Sergo's relationship with Svetlana went wrong, and she preferred Yuri Zhdanov. And Lavrenty Pavlovich began to devote the lion's share of his time to the creation of Soviet nuclear and thermonuclear weapons.

ATOMIC SWORD

Back in March 1942, Beria, based on the data of Soviet intelligence agents in England and the United States, reported on the work unfolding there to create an atomic bomb. In a memorandum addressed to Stalin, he wrote: "In various capitalist countries, in parallel with research on the problems of fission of the atomic nucleus in order to obtain a new source of energy, work has begun on the use of nuclear energy for military purposes.

Since 1939 this kind of work has been carried out on a large scale in France, Great Britain, the United States and Germany. They are aimed at developing methods for using uranium to produce a new explosive. The work is carried out under the conditions of the strictest regime of secrecy."

Having outlined a number of technical details of the British atomic project and described the principles of operation of the uranium bomb, Beria also listed the world's main uranium deposits: in the Belgian Congo, in the Sudetes, in Canada and in Portugal. In conclusion, Lavrenty Pavlovich suggested: "Taking into account the importance and urgency for the Soviet Union of the practical use of the energy of uranium 235 atoms for military purposes, it would be advisable to carry out the following: 1) Consider the possibility of creating a special body that includes scientific expert consultants who are in constant contact with the GKO for the purpose of studying the problem, coordinating and directing the efforts of all scientists and scientific research organizations of the USSR taking part in the work on the problem of uranium atomic energy. 2) Transfer documents on uranium that are currently at the disposal of the NKVD, subject to the secrecy regime, for familiarization of leading specialists, and ask them to evaluate them, and also, if possible, use the data contained in them about their work.

Iosif Vissarionovich agreed with this proposal. But only on February 11, 1943, the GKO adopted a resolution on the organization of research on the use of atomic energy. On March 10, I.V. was appointed their immediate supervisor. Kurchatov is the head of the secret laboratory No. 2 of the USSR Academy of Sciences. In September 1943, Kurchatov was elected to the Academy of Sciences for an additional seat specially created for him. Later, Beria spoke to Sudoplatov's deputy for science, Professor Ya.P. Terletsky about Kurchatov: "He was also made an academician!" The GKO was responsible for supervising the Soviet nuclear project, which was still in its infancy.

entrusted to V.M. Molotov. Beria, in this project, became Molotov's deputy for intelligence. On March 7, 1943, evaluating the information received from intelligence, Kurchatov wrote to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars M.G. Pervukhin: "Obtaining this material is of enormous, invaluable importance for our state and science. Now we have important guidelines for the subsequent urgent research, they enable us to bypass many, very laborious phases of the development of the uranium problem and learn about new scientific and technical ways to solve it ... The totality of information ... indicates the technical feasibility of solving the entire problem in a much shorter period than our scientists, who are not yet familiar with the progress of work on this problem abroad, think.

And already in a note dated March 22, 1943, addressed to the State Defense Committee, and

in fact - Beria, Igor Vasilyevich was able to pose very specific questions to the intelligence officers, based on just one report: "Having familiarized myself with American publications (intelligence data) on this issue, I was able to establish a new direction in solving the entire uranium problem. The prospects for this direction are extraordinarily exciting.

The bomb will be made of "unearthly" material that has disappeared on the planet ... Until now, in our country, work on transuranium elements and, in particular, on eka-osmium (now this element is called plutonium, which, contrary to Kurchatov's opinion, is in small quantities still present in uranium ores.) have not been carried out. Everything that is known in this direction was carried out by Prof. Mac Millan (California, Berkeley) ... It can be stated with certainty that the relevant material from prof. McMillan

available.

In this regard, I appeal to you with a request to instruct the Intelligence Agencies to find out what has been done in the direction in question in America.

And already in February 1944, by order of Beria, a special department "C" was created to process information on atomic topics. However, under Vyacheslav Mikhailovich, things hardly moved forward. As a result, on September 29, 1944, Kurchatov wrote to Beria: "In a letter to Comrade M.G. Pervukhin (People's Commissar of the chemical industry, who oversaw the atomic project before Molotov) and mine addressed to you, we reported on the state of work on the problem of uranium and on their colossal development abroad.

During the last month I have been engaged in the preliminary radiation of new very extensive (3000 pages of text) materials concerning the problem of uranium.

This study once again showed that a concentration of scientific and engineering-technical forces, unprecedented in scale in the history of world science, has been created around this problem abroad, and has already achieved most valuable results.

In our country, despite the great shift in the development of work on uranium in 1943-1944, the situation remains completely unsatisfactory (during this time the number of employees of Laboratory No. 2 increased from 25 to 83.).

Especially unfavorable is the situation with raw materials and separation issues. The work of laboratory No. 2 is insufficiently provided with material and technical base. Works of many related organizations

do not receive the necessary development due to the lack of a unified leadership and underestimation in these organizations of the significance of the problem.

Knowing your extremely busy schedule, nevertheless, in view of the historical significance of the uranium problem, I decided to disturb you and ask you for instructions on such an organization of work that would correspond to the capabilities and significance of our Great State in world culture.

The consequence of this letter was that, by the GKO decree of December 3, 1944, Beria was entrusted with "monitoring

development of work on uranium" (as the nuclear project was then called).

The former head of department "C" P.A. Sudoplatov recalled: "In 1944, Kheifets (a KGB resident in America, later a member of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, who was arrested in his case in 1951, but happily escaped execution.) And reported to me and Beria his impressions of meetings with Oppenheimer and other famous scientists employed in the nuclear project. He said that Oppenheimer and those around him were deeply concerned that the Germans might get ahead of America in building the atomic bomb.

After listening to Heifetz's report, Beria said that the time had come for closer cooperation between the security agencies and scientists. In order to improve relations, remove the suspicion and critical attitude of specialists towards the NKVD bodies, Beria suggested establishing more trusting, personal relations with Kurchatov, Kikoin and Alikhanov. I invited the scientists to my house for dinner. However, this was not only a hospitable gesture, on the orders of Beria, I and my deputies - Generals Eitingon and Sazykin - as operational workers had to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Kurchatov, Alikhanov and Kikoin. We behaved with them as friends, confidants, to whom they could turn with their daily worries and requests.

One evening, after working on the next material, we had dinner in the recreation room. There was a bottle of the best Armenian cognac on the table. I can't stand alcohol at all, even a small amount always gave me a severe headache, and it seemed to me that our leading scientists, by their temperament and hard mental work, also do not drink alcoholic beverages. So I offered them a teaspoon of cognac in Liz. They looked at me in amazement, laughed and poured themselves full glasses, drinking to the success of our cause.

At the beginning of 1944, Beria ordered me to send all intelligence materials, developments and signals that affected people involved in the atomic problem and their relatives. Soon I received a special message that Kikoin's younger brother naively shared his doubts about the wisdom of leadership with a colleague, and he immediately informed the operative worker who was in touch.

When I informed Beria about this, he ordered me to call Kikoin and tell him to influence his brother. I decided not to call Kikoin, went to his laboratory and told him about the "pranks" of his younger brother. Kikoin promised to talk to him. Their explanation was recorded by operational equipment.

listening, installed in the apartments of leading nuclear scientists.

I was surprised that the next day Beria showed up at Kikoin's laboratory to finally dispel his fears about his brother. He gathered the whole trio - Kurchatov, Alikhanov, Kikoin - and said in my presence that General Sudoplatov was attached to them in order to provide full assistance and assistance in the work; that they enjoy the absolute trust of Comrade Stalin and his personal. All the information that is provided to them should help in

fulfillment of the task of the Soviet government. Beria repeated: there is no reason to worry about the fate of their relatives or people they trust - they are guaranteed absolute security. Scientists will be created such living conditions that will enable them to concentrate only on solving issues of strategic importance for the state.

On Beria's instructions, all scientists involved in the Soviet atomic project were provided with decent housing, dachas, used special shops where they could buy goods on a par with government leaders using special cards; All personnel of the nuclear project were provided with special nutrition and qualified medical care. At the same time, all the personal files of scientists, specialists and operational workers directly involved in the project or in obtaining intelligence information on the atomic problem were transferred from the personnel department to Beria's secretariat. At the same time, the most important operational materials on atomic energy obtained by intelligence were transferred to Beria's secretariat from the American department. About two hundred pages were withdrawn from the file of the operational development of "Enommoz" on the atomic bomb. In order to strengthen the security regime, no one had access to these materials without Beria's sanction. I remember a conflict with Beria's deputy, Zavenyagin, who demanded that he be acquainted with the documents. I refused him, nor did we have a strong quarrel; he got access to intelligence materials only after Beria's permission.

As we can see, Lavrenty Pavlovich and his people began to take care of the participants in the atomic project even before he single-handedly headed it at the end of 1944. On the one hand, Beria created all the conditions for scientists to work, provided the maximum possible comfort, provided all the necessary information. But, on the other hand, Beria constantly kept under the hood not only the main participants in the project, but also their relatives and friends. This also had its advantage. At the time of work on the bomb, they all had guarantees against prosecution by punitive authorities. However, the students were well aware that in case of failure, Stalin's wrath would fall not only on them, but also on their relatives. And this prompted to devote all their efforts to the creation of a new superweapon.

Kurchatov's letter dated September 29, 1944 spoke of a sharp shortage of uranium, whose deposits in the USSR had not yet been discovered. As a result, the first Soviet atomic bombs had to use captured German uranium, as well as raw materials mined in Saxony, the Czech Sudetes and the Rhodope Mountains in

Bulgaria. But Beria immediately took care of more accessible and more secret sources of uranium. Under the Council of Ministers, the main department was created, which was engaged in the search and enrichment of uranium ores. As the scientific director of the commission on atomic raw materials and the head of the top-secret special sector No. 6 of the All-Union Institute of Mineral Raw Materials, Professor Mikhail Nikolaevich Althausen, who dealt with uranium, recalled, once in the 45th, he and other geologists - uranium specialists were summoned to a meeting with Beria:

"We brought samples of uranium ores with us and laid them out on his desk. And then they heard a dirty mate - these were the people's commissar's assistants

unhappy that the samples scratched the table

Beria himself was tactful and attentive. We discussed the whole range of issues related to exploration, production and processing of raw materials. The meeting began at 12 at night and ended by 6 in the morning (all officials adapted to Stalin's nocturnal lifestyle. - / Kommersant S. /). We were never denied anything - the workforce appeared on demand, food and equipment were issued out of turn. Travel allowances, for example, paid us four times more than other geologists."

In some uranium mines, where the ores were especially concentrated, and therefore the risk of getting sick with radiation sickness is extremely high, prisoners worked. The former driver of the Butygichag mine in Kolyma, Petr Khmel'nitsky, recalls: "I worked as an unaccompanied driver under the number 3-2-989. Of my thousand ("numbered enemies of the people" under the letter 3-2), 36 people survived in one winter of 1952. They died from hunger, cold, overwork, overexposure. If you pass through the pass with the symbolic name "Think", on the mountain range "Shaitan" you will meet the largest camp burial, human remains from which are pulled away by animals. In places, the road abounds with human skulls, like eggshells.

But uranium began to be mined at domestic deposits only in the last years of Beria's leadership of the atomic project. In the meantime, let's return to the origins of the "Soviet Manhattan".

On February 28, 1945, signed by the head of the NKGB Merkulov, a memorandum on the progress of work on the creation of an atomic bomb in the United States, which Lavrenty Pavlovich rated as "important" in his resolution, fell on Beria's desk. The document emphasized: "Research work carried out by the leading scientists of England and the USA on the use of intra-atomic energy to create an atomic bomb showed that this type of weapon should be considered practically feasible and the problem of its development is currently reduced to two main tasks:

Production of the required amount of fissile elements - uranium-235 and plutonium.

Structural development of ghost in action of the bomb.

Now Beria was mainly engaged in atomic affairs. General Pyotr Semyonovich Motinov, who brought uranium samples from Canada to Moscow from the Soviet agent, physicist Allan Anna MPEI, recalled:

"At the airport, the Director himself met me (head of army intelligence, Colonel-General F.F. Kuznetsov. - /B.S./). With great precautions, I took out from my belt a precious ampoule with

uranium and handed it to the director. He immediately went to the black car, which was parked right there at the airfield, and handed the ampoule to the car. - And who was there? I then asked the Director. - This is Beria, - the Director whispered.

Four days later, a message appeared that Beria had become a marshal. There was no limit to the indignation of the front-line soldiers, but everyone protested

whisper." Well, an ordinary soldier, I think, didn't care who Stalin decided to promote to marshals - Zhukov, Beria or Meretskov, whom, like Vannikov, Lavrenty Pavlovich interrogated "with partiality" in the summer of 41st. But the generals and marshals, probably, were offended that the generals wore the same uniform and rank with them, and now here is the marshal of the punitive department, who did not sniff gunpowder.

The main information on the atomic bomb came from the talented German physicist Klaus Fuchs, who adhered to leftist beliefs and worked for Moscow for ideological reasons. Fuchs handed over the scheme of the American atomic device, which was carefully copied by Soviet scientists. Stalin categorically forbade them to engage in any amateur performances here, otherwise it would not suddenly explode. And Beria strictly followed that the academicians would not be too immersed in the empyrean, and if they made any improvements, then only within the framework of the main scheme set by the American atomic project. In general, a number of private decisions of Soviet scientists used to create the "product" turned out to be simpler and more rational than those of their American colleagues. But it finds its explanation. The Americans were pioneers, they had to act by trial and error. Our scientists already knew the path traversed by Oppenheimer and his collaborators, and could calmly look for the optimal solution, having in stock one that was successfully implemented.

Here, for example, is how Kurchatov turned away about the description of the method of activating the atomic bomb received from Fuchs (in the conclusion on intelligence materials sent on March 5 and April 6, 1945): "The material is of great interest: along with the methods and schemes being developed, it contains possibilities that have not yet been considered. These include... the use of an "explosion inward" to set off a bomb...

The method of bringing the bomb into action by "explosion inside" (pyro-1 on me wasa), which we learned about quite recently, and work on which we are just starting, is outlined. However, all its advantages over the counter-shot method have already become clear to us.

Interesting phenomena of non-uniform action of a blast wave are described. Very valuable are the indications that this uneven action can be eliminated by an appropriate arrangement of detonators and the use of interlayers of explosives of different action.

In view of the fact that research on this method has not yet advanced at all in our country, it is now impossible to formulate questions in this area that require additional elucidation. I would consider it necessary to show the relevant text by Prof. Yu.B. Khariton"

Fuchs also passed on many of his own developments of the hydrogen bomb, which Soviet scientists were able to bring to life even faster than their American counterparts. Beria also had other agents in the American atomic center in Los Alamos, for example, a mechanic

David Greenglass, who worked with the famous Soviet resident and his son-in-law Julius Rosenberg. Later, Julius was made the main "scapegoat" for leaking American nuclear secrets and, together with his wife Ethel, was executed in the electric chair, while Fuchs was sentenced by the more humane British Themis to only 14 years.

prisons, of which he served only 9.

There were also unknown soldiers of that great battle for Soviet nuclear weapons, the truth about which comes to light only in recent years. Here in 1992, the former KGB archivist Vasily Mitrokhin emigrated to England, who secretly hated the Soviet system and accumulated secret material ahead of time (which he secretly took out of work either in boots or in socks). It took seven years for the British agents to find the caches at Mitrokhin's dacha and forward them by diplomatic post from Moscow to London, while counterintelligence sorted out the Mitrokhin collection. And only in 1999 did the British and world public learn that a certain Melita Norwood, who in 1999, when the revelation followed, was 87 years old, in the 40s, being the secretary of the head of the English nuclear project, handed over to Soviet intelligence invaluable information about the atomic bomb .

Some data on the uranium problem, as well as the scientists involved in it, were obtained in defeated Germany. Immediately after the surrender of Germany, Beria's deputy in the NKVD, Lieutenant General A.P. Zavenyagin went to Berlin to look for physicists involved in the German uranium project. A specialist in the diffusion separation of isotopes, Nobel laureate Gustav Hertz, a designer of electron-optical devices Manere von Ardenne, a specialist in uranium metallurgy Nikolai Ril (he was later awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labor), and others were voluntarily forcibly brought to the USSR. They contributed to the creation Soviet atomic bomb, in particular, having designed a super-high-speed centrifuge for the separation of uranium isotopes.

Then there was the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which finally forced Stalin to recognize the creation of nuclear weapons as the main priority of the Soviet state. Member of the nuclear project Professor Ya.P. Terletsky recalled that Stalin reacted to this event very nervously: "It turns out that after the explosion of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, Stalin gave a grandiose dressing, for the first time during the war he lost his temper, stomped his fists, pounded his feet. After all, the dream of spreading the socialist revolution to the whole of Europe was crumbling, a dream that seemed so close to being realized after the capitulation of Germany and, as it were, crossed out by the negligence of our nuclear scientists, led by Kurchatov. As Yakov Petrovich testifies, the experiments and conclusions of Kurchatov and his team were a repetition of American and British developments obtained with the help of Department C: "At the same time, theorists were amazed at the incredible intuition of Kurchatov, who, not being a theoretician, accurately "predicted" their final result.

This hardly causes delight among those who, following Igor Nikolaevich Golovin, created a naive myth about a super-genius physics who allegedly determined all the main directions of atomic

problems, which allegedly alone combined in his street the genius of Fermi, the talents of Bethe, Szilard, Wigner, Oppenheimer and many others.

Such an image of Kurchatov belittles his true merits as a truly outstanding scientist who has shown phenomenal organizational skills and who has managed to solve the problem of creating atomic weapons in our country in an unusually short time. Necessary

Is it still possible to attribute to him an incredible genius on a purely scientific level in order to justify the exaltation of his name? .. The myth of Kurchatov's super-genius is undoubtedly beneficial to those who, by counting themselves among his students or followers, transfer onto themselves the radiance of his

glory"

In this case, it is worth adding that, speaking of Kurchatov's "phenomenal organizational abilities", Terletsky gives him a significant part of Beria's merits, since it was not customary to praise Lavrenty Pavlovich, much less talk about him as a brilliant organizer. Kurchatov, in fact, acted as a link between other academic physicists who solved specific problems of creating nuclear weapons, and Beria, through whom the necessary intelligence information was received and orders from industry were sent.

The first combat use of atomic weapons forced Stalin, finally, to resolutely turn his face to the Soviet nuclear (uranium) project and allocate really serious funds for its implementation. Now the entire economy of the country was mobilized to create an atomic bomb. Fortunately, the Second World War had already ended, and the released people and capacities could be directed to the development and production of a new superweapon. Neither money nor human lives were spared for this.

From now on, it was impossible to hope to overwhelm the enemy with corpses, as happened in the Great Patriotic War. The ratio of irretrievable losses on the Eastern Front is best judged by the ratio of irretrievable losses of officers, who, unlike soldiers, were calculated quite accurately not only in Germany, but also in the USSR. In 1941-1944, the Wehrmacht lost 65.2 thousand officers of the ground forces in the East in the dead and missing. The Red Army during the same period (without the Navy and Air Force and with the exception of the political, administrative, medical, veterinary and legal composition of the ground forces, represented in Germany not by officers, but by officials) lost about 754 thousand officers only who died and did not return from captivity. This gives a ratio of about 11.6:1. Considering that there were approximately the same number of privates per officer in the combat units of the ground forces of the Red Army and the Wehrmacht, the ratio of irretrievable losses of the armies of the two countries should be close to the ratio of officer losses.

Now, after the appearance of nuclear and missile weapons, the confrontation with the new potential adversary of the United States has finally moved into the sphere of high technologies. And Beria had to be responsible for equipping the Soviet armed forces with the latest types of weapons.

On August 20, 1945, on the initiative of Lavrenty Pavlovich, a Special Committee was formed by a decree of the State Defense Committee. into it

included: L.P. Beria (chairman), B.L. Vannikov (deputy chairman, people's commissar of ammunition), candidate members of the Politburo G.M. Malenkov (Secretary of the Central Committee) and N.A. Voznesensky (Chairman of the State Planning Commission and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers), A.T. Zavenyagin (Deputy Commissar of Internal Affairs), M.G. Pervukhin (People's Commissar of the chemical industry) and "atomic academics" I.V. Kurchatov, A.F. Ioffe and P.L. Kapitsa.

V.A., Deputy Commissar of Ammunition and assistant to Beria as a member of the GKO, also became a member of the Special Committee and its secretary. Makhnev.

The Special Committee was entrusted with "management of all work on the use of intra-atomic energy of uranium: the development of scientific research in this area; wide deployment of geological exploration and the creation of a raw material base of the USSR for the extraction of uranium, as well as the use of uranium deposits outside the USSR (in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and other countries); organization of industry for processing uranium, production of special equipment and materials related to the use of nuclear energy; as well as the construction of nuclear power plants and the development and production of the atomic bomb." Beria was appointed chairman of the Special Committee. On this line, as a member of the Special Committee, even G.M. Malenkov, the second person in the party leadership after Stalin.

Stalin spared neither money nor people for the atomic project. For him at that moment it was the main task, comparable in importance only with the victory over Germany. But the demand from the participants, Lavrenty Pavlovich understood this well, would be special. If you can't make the bomb quickly, heads will roll, not him in the first place. They will be declared an American, British, Musavatist or Turkish spy, a conspirator, deliberately delaying the creation of nuclear weapons so much needed by the USSR - and welcome to the next world after Heinrich Yagoda and Nikolai Yezhov.

And Lavrenty Pavlovich managed to make a bomb in the shortest possible time, primarily thanks to the achievements of the Soviet scientific and technical intelligence, which was subordinate to him personally at that time. The 13th paragraph of the resolution on the Special Committee read as follows: "Instruct comrade. Beria to take measures to organize overseas intelligence work to obtain more complete technical and economic information about the uranium industry and atomic bombs, entrusting him with the leadership of all intelligence work in this area carried out by the intelligence agencies (NKGB, RUKA (Intelligence Directorate of the Red Army. - a good abbreviation / - B.S. - etc.) ". Thus, Beria was then subordinated to all intelligence work to collect information about nuclear, and then about thermonuclear weapons. Although, formally speaking, at that moment intelligence was part of the NKGB, then, from May 1947, to the Information Committee under the Council of Ministers, which united all intelligence services, and again to the MGB from October 1949. However, until the arrest of the "Lubyansk Marshal" in June 1953, all structures involved in atomic espionage, obeyed only Beria.

The same decree, at the suggestion of Lavrenty Pavlovich, created the First Main Directorate, which practically coordinated the activities of various departments participating in the atomic project, and was controlled only by the Special Committee.

Soon the Second Main Directorate appeared, which was engaged in the development and production of rocket weapons - the future means of delivering atomic and hydrogen charges. His activities were also supervised by the Special Committee and personally by Beria.

Beria's son, Sergo Lavrentievich, who designed sea-based missiles, also worked under the authority of the Second Main Directorate.

And, as can be seen from the letter of Academician G.V. Korenev, Beria Jr. did not disdain banal plagiarism, quite possibly with the connivance of his father. The absolute secrecy of the topic favored this. True, it is possible that Lavrenty Pavlovich still did not know about the tricks of his offspring. Nevertheless, Korenev's letter explains why, after his release, Sergo Lavrentievich did not dare to seek the restoration of his Ph.D. and doctoral degrees, but preferred to re-defend his Ph.D. thesis on a different topic.

The resolution on the creation of the PSU specifically emphasized: "No organizations, institutions and persons, without special permission from the State Defense Committee, have the right to interfere in the administrative, economic and operational activities of the First Directorate, its enterprises and institutions, or to require information about its work or work carried out on orders from the First Main Office. All reporting on these works is sent only to the Special Committee under the State Defense Committee.

The head of the First Main Directorate, Beria recommended the then People's Commissar of Ammunition, Colonel-General B.L. Vannikov, who, as we remember, was arrested in 1941 in the "Aviator Case". Boris Lvovich confessed to everything, although he was not to blame for anything. But, unlike Stern, Smushkevich, Loktionov and other generals who were waiting for a bullet in the Kuibyshev basement, Vannikov survived. Stalin decided that such a valuable specialist would still be useful. Vannikov was released, and he successfully worked throughout the war as Deputy People's Commissar for Armaments, and then as People's Commissar for Ammunition. The general understood that the slightest oversight could lead to consequences much worse than in the 41st, and Lavrenty Pavlovich's requirements, first as a member of the State Defense Committee, and then as head of the Special Committee, obeyed implicitly. True, whenever possible, he tried to shift the responsibility to others. According to the recollections of the participants in the atomic project, Boris Lvovich often fell ill before important tests. And to intrigue against his benefactor Lavrenty Pavlovich, who at one time pulled him out of prison, Vannikov had no idea. Something, but Beria knew how to select personnel.

According to Vannikov's memoirs, Stalin proposed precisely his candidacy for the post of chairman of the Technical Council under the Special Committee, which included well-known nuclear scientists. Iosif Vissarionovich motivated this proposal in the following way: "Let's appoint Com. Vannikov, he will do well, both Ioffe and Kapitsa will obey him, and if they don't, he has a strong hand; besides, he is known in our country, he is known by industry and military specialists.

However, the unexpected happened here. The proud and independent Pyotr Leonidovich Kapitsa, the best student or friend of the great Rutherford, did not want to obey either Vannikov or Beria himself. October 3, 1945

a year later, he wrote a complaint to Stalin: "Comrade Beria cares little about the reputation of our scientists (your job, they say, is to invent, research, but why do you need a reputation). Now faced with Comrade. Beria on the Special Committee (Special Committee. - / B. S. /), I especially clearly felt the inadmissibility of his attitude towards scientists. It's time for comrades like Comrade. Beria began to learn respect for scientists. All this makes me feel clearly that the time has not yet come in our

country for close and fruitful cooperation of political forces with scientists.

And on November 25, 1945, a new, even sharper message from Kapitsa to Stalin followed, in which he asked to be released "from participation in the Special Committee and the Technical Council." The academician motivated his request as follows: "Comrades Beria, Malenkov, Voznesensky behave in the Special Committee like supermen. In particular Comrade. Beria. Comrade Beria's main weakness is that the conductor must not only wave his baton, but also understand the score. With this, Beria is weak. Comrade Vannikov and others from the Technical Council remind me of that citizen from the joke who, not believing the doctors, drank all the mineral waters in a row in Essentuki in the hope that one of

will help them."

Kapitsa sharply criticized the activities of the Special Committee: "It seems to me that there is much that is abnormal in the organization of work on the atomic bomb. In any case, what is being done now is not the shortest and cheapest way to create it. But if one strives for quick success, then the path to victory will always be connected with risk and with the concentration of the blow of the main forces in a very limited and well-chosen direction. On this question I do not agree with the comrades. The only way here is a sole decision, like that of the commander in chief, and a narrower military council.

Stalin immediately familiarized Beria with Kapitsa's letter of November 26. And Lavrenty Pavlovich immediately called the obstinate academician, apparently having received instructions from Stalin to try to establish relations with him. Here is how, according to Kapitsa, the content of this conversation is conveyed by his friend, the outstanding director Yuri Petrovich Lyubimov: "When Pyotr Leonidovich told Beria on the phone: 'If you need to talk to me, then you come.'" "He knew he was taking risks, he was taking a big risk, but he would not be associated with a bandit."

Lyubimov commented on this act of the academician: "Already when he told me about his conversation with Beria, I realized that something was not at all desperate, insane courage, which gives nothing - except arrest. He calculated everything, including his letters to Stalin, in which he wrote that Beria was a conductor who could not read the score. He calculated everything and came to the conclusion that he should do it. But then he will be much calmer. Will not gnaw conscience. And he won't have to work with Beria. Together with him to create the Soviet atomic bomb. Naturally, neither Lavrenty Pavlovich nor Iosif Vissarionovich could endure such impudence. Already on December 21, 1945, Kapitsa was removed from the Technical Council and the Special Committee.

Apparently, Pyotr Leonidovich deliberately provoked a conflict with Beria and other members of the Special Committee in order to create a plausible pretext and refuse to work on nuclear weapons.

Obviously, the academician considered it immoral to work on a bomb that could endanger the existence of all mankind. It can also be assumed that Kapitsa did not want to give such a superweapon into the hands of the communist regime and specifically Stalin, in connection with which the risk of its use increased many times over, at least until the arc of nuclear and thermonuclear munitions on both sides was accumulated so much that their use has become

meaningless: in a thermonuclear war, the whole ball would have died. The use of the first low-yield atomic bombs, like those that the Americans dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was quite possible, and Kapitsa was probably not convinced that Stalin would not be tempted to test new weapons not only at the test site. As for the Soviet government, which at one time deceived him into his homeland, and then did not let him go back to England to his friend Rutherford, who made him not allowed to travel abroad, Pyotr Leonidovich had no illusions, and he was not going to make a miracle bomb for "them". And he directly spoke to his friend Yu.P. Lyubimov, when the authorities began persecuting the academician. AD Sakharova: "What is to be done, Yuri Petrovich? They don't even understand what level this scientist is. And second: they absolutely do not understand that he has a guilt complex. After all, I did not begin to make a bomb for them, but Andrei Dmitrievich did ... "

But Kapitsa understood perfectly well that to directly declare his refusal to work on the creation of an atomic bomb meant to sign his own death warrant. Here you won't get off with arrest and "sharashka". Yes, and to arrest the world-famous academician, in order to then quietly shoot without trial, according to the verdict of the Special Conference, they would hardly have begun. Still, the very disappearance of Pyotr Leonidovich would have made a noise all over the world and would inevitably have given rise to rumors about his arrest and murder. It is more likely that Kapitsa would have been given a "natural" death from a heart attack with the help of poisons developed in the secret laboratory of the NKVD of Professor G.M. Mairanovsky, who reported directly to Beria and carried out orders from the Politburo. And a magnificent obituary in the newspapers would be published. But Pyotr Leonidovich did not want an obituary at the age of 51, but wanted to live long. So he made a cunning move, slandering Lavrenty Pavlovich and trying to convince Stalin that it was impossible for him to work with Beria.

Stalin did not believe Kapitsa and left Beria in charge of the atomic project. In the end, among the members and candidate members of the Politburo, there were no narrow specialists in nuclear physics at all. Incomplete higher technical education, except for Beria, was still with Malenkov and Molotov. However, the experience of managing the uranium project by Vyacheslav Mikhailovich turned out to be unsuccessful, and Georgy Maksimilianovich was a specialist more in apparatus and party affairs, and not at all in the implementation of specific technical projects. The scandal that soon broke out in the aviation industry under his jurisdiction, connected with the adoption of defective fighters, confirmed this once again. So, Joseph Vissarionovich simply did not have another candidate, except for Beria, who earned the title of Hero of Socialist Labor and the rank of marshal for the production of weapons in the war. The atomic project was now allocated the lion's share of the country's resources, nor should one of the members of the highest political leadership be in charge of this enterprise. As for the nuclear score, Beria

over time, he mastered it, with the help of academicians, at least to the extent that he could assess the chances of success of one or another solution proposed by specialists. And with the latter once again he shunned to consult. Deputy People's Commissar for Armaments V.N. Novikov recalled how during the war the question of how long it would take to double the daily production of rifles at the Izhevsk plant was decided. Although Stalin demanded that the deadline be met in three months, and most of the members of the State Planning Commission were inclined to this, Beria eventually listened to the opinion of a specialist - Novikov and set the real period indicated by him - seven months, although this is clearly not

pleased Stalin. Novikov explained this decision by saying that it was much worse not to go against Stalin's opinion, but to deceive Joseph Vissarionovich. If later it turns out that it took not three months to increase production, but seven months, the perpetrators of the deception could not take off their heads. And for the atomic project, Stalin asked stricter than for any other. Therefore, before reporting to him, Beria had to check three times, and here it was impossible to do without advice from academicians and engineers.

Yes, Lavrenty Pavlovich sometimes shouted at the luminaries of science and sometimes did not treat them with due respect (although Kapitsa, I suspect, deliberately exaggerated). But this is also understandable. He was already well aware that if the "product" did not explode, the academicians would probably be arrested and shoved into "sharashkas", and he, Beria, would certainly be declared an American spy and shot for disrupting the execution of such a task, on which, in the literal sense of the word, the life and death of communist power depend. Then Stalin would cease to need him, and he knew too much to

keep him alive.

And, unlike Kapitsa, Beria had no fears about the future guilt complex. It was for Pyotr Leonidovich that the communist state was alien and dangerous. For Lavrenty Pavlovich, it was, if not ideal, but his own. In the future, he thought to improve it, to make it competitive on a global scale. But atomic weapons for the Soviet country considered vital. If not for his organizational talent and intelligence achievements, the Soviet atomic bomb could have appeared not in 1949, but five to ten years later. During this time, the USSR could have lost in the Cold War. This could happen, for example, if the peoples of Eastern Europe rebelled, and it is far from certain that under the conditions of the nuclear and thermonuclear monopoly of the United States, Stalin and his successors would risk suppressing the uprisings in East Germany and Hungary by armed force. And then, probably, the "domino principle" would have worked: the Baltic states and Western Ukraine would have broken away from the USSR. The collapse of communism in this case would have come not in 1991, but, perhaps, as early as the 1950s.

So Lavrenty Pavlovich, quite possibly, helped his party comrades to stay in power for a few extra decades. But they did not appreciate this feat and mercilessly decommissioned the true father of Soviet nuclear and thermonuclear weapons in 1953. Genuine, because without Lavrenty Pavlovich, all the discoveries of Khariton and Sakharov (they are usually called the fathers of the Soviet atomic and hydrogen bombs, respectively) would hardly have been embodied in operating "products".

The motives of Kapitsa's act were seen somewhat differently by General Sudoplatov, who claims that Pyotr Leonidovich and Beria did not have any clashes at first: "Participating in the meetings of the Special Committee, I realized for the first time how important the personal relations of government members were, their ambitions in making important government decisions. The people's commissars, members of this committee, strove to establish their position and positions at all costs. Very often there were heated arguments and hard-hitting explanations. Beria acted as an arbitrator and sought the unconditional strict implementation of all directives of the leadership.

I maintained friendly relations with both Ioffe and Kapitsa. By

At the suggestion of Beria, I gave Kapitsa a hunting rifle. Kapitsa once complained that he had only one copy of a book about Russian engineers written by his father-in-law, Academician Krylov, a major shipbuilding engineer, in poor condition. I resorted to the services of a special government printing house - the book was printed in two copies on excellent paper. Kapitsa sent one copy to Stalin, hoping to get an appointment with him.

I had to observe the growing rivalry between Kapitsa and Kurchatov at meetings of the Special Committee. Kapitsa was an outstanding personality, an excellent tactician and strategist, and a major organizer of science. Often he commented on scientific speeches with a great sense of humor. I remember that one meeting of the Special Committee in 1945 took place during the broadcast hours from London of a football match between our team and the English team. Members of the Politburo and the government were shocked when Kapitsa suggested that they stop the meeting and listen to the match. There was an awkward pause, but Beria, who appreciated humor (and was also an avid football fan. - / B. S. /), to everyone's amazement, announced a break. The tension subsided. And then the mood of those present rose, because our team won.

Kapitsa, who played an important role in initiating our work on the atomic problem and establishing contacts with Western scientists, in particular Terletsky and Bor (this meeting took place in the autumn of 1945 and, contrary to Sudoplatov's opinion, did not make any significant contribution to the Soviet atomic project; to In addition, Niels Bohr informed Danish counterintelligence about the content of his conversation with Soviet physicists - /B.S./), naturally, claimed an independent, leading position in the implementation of the atomic project. But soon relations between Kapitsa, Beria and Voznesensky deteriorated. Kapitsa suggested that Kurchatov consult with him on evaluating the results of the work and conclusions before reporting to the meetings of the Special Committee. Pervukhin supported Kapitsa, but Beria and Voznesensky disagreed. Beria demanded that Kapitsa and Kurchatov submit alternative proposals to the government. Moreover, Beria suggested that Kapitsa duplicate a number of Kurchatov's experiments on the basis of his institute (Lavrenty Pavlovich rightly believed that at the preparatory, experimental stage of the project, which did not yet require large expenditures, healthy competition between scientists, a kind of creative competition and mutual control of the results obtained would only help cause and will make sure that the Soviet atomic project is on the right track. - /B.S./).

Kapitsa was indignant and argued that such a reorientation of his institute would mean the actual curtailment of work on theoretical physics in the Soviet Union (Petr Leonidovich, as an experienced organizer of science, could not help but realize that Lavrenty Pavlovich was, in essence, right. apparently, at that moment he had already made the final decision for himself not to participate in the Soviet atomic project anymore, and was only looking for a reason to get out of it. He knew perfectly well that this would be followed by severe sanctions, and he would certainly lose his institute. B. S./).

I don't remember exactly, but, in my opinion, a month later, in October 1945, Kapitsa turned to Beria and Voznesensky for an explanation why they had not consulted him when they decided to create new educational institutions for training specialists in the field of

of nuclear physics outside the Academy of Sciences - Engineering Physics (MEPhI) and Physics and Technology (MIPT).

Kapitsa wrote to Stalin that Beria and Voznesensky did not listen to the opinions of scientists, that only scientists could be entrusted with the leadership of the atomic project. After unsuccessful attempts to get support from Stalin in this conflict, Kapitsa was soon removed from the Special Committee. He was left alone, but deprived of access to atomic development."

Perhaps Pavel Anatolyevich sincerely believed that in the case of Kapitsa, it was all about the personal ambitions of the scientist. And in order to mitigate the consequences of the conflict, he claimed that the scientist was allegedly "left alone." In fact, Pyotr Leonidovich knew the Soviet system well enough to understand: to demand explanations from members of the top political leadership, to insist that the most important military project, on which the political future of the communist regime largely depended, be given entirely into the hands of non-party scientists - this is the right path. excommunication not only from the atomic project, but also from any administrative and scientific activity in general, if not a direct path to the next world. And Kapitsa, as we know, was by no means left alone, but was expelled from almost all scientific institutions, sent to an honorary link to his own dacha near Moscow. You can tell he got off lightly.

As for the participation of Kapitsa in the early stages of the Soviet atomic project in 1943-1945, it is also quite understandable. Then there was no certainty that Hitler would not get the atomic bomb, the creation of Soviet nuclear weapons as a counterweight to him looked justified. But in 1945, Germany and Japan were defeated, and the atomic bomb was already made in the USA. Obviously, under these conditions, Pyotr Leonidovich considered it immoral to work in order for the deadly superweapon to receive a regime with unpredictable behavior in the international arena.

Shortly after Kapitsa was excommunicated from the atomic project, on January 25, 1946, Stalin called Beria, Molotov and Kurchatov to a meeting. Here is how this meeting went according to Kurchatov's recording: "The conversation lasted approximately one hour from 7.30 to 8.30 in the evening ...

Main impressions of the conversation. Comrade Stalin's great love for Russia and V.I. Lenin, about whom he spoke in connection with his great hope for the development of science in our country...

In his views on the future development of work, Comrade Stalin said that it was not worth engaging in petty work, but that it was necessary to carry it out on a large scale, on a Russian scale, that in this respect the widest possible assistance would be rendered.

Comrade Stalin said that there was no need to look for cheaper ways, that there was no need (to delay? / - B.S. /) work, that work should be carried out quickly and in rough basic forms ...

In relation to scientists, Comrade Stalin was preoccupied with the idea of how to alleviate and help them in their material and everyday situation. And in awards for big things, for example, for solving our problem. He said that our scientists are very modest, and they never notice that they live badly - this is already bad, and although, he says, our state is strong

suffered, but it is always possible to ensure that (several thousand? / - B.S. /) a person lives for glory, his dachas, so that a person can rest, so that there is a car.

In the work of TS, Stalin said - that we must go decisively, that by investing decisively all means, but along the main lines.

We must also make every possible use of Germany, which has people, equipment, experience, and factories. T. Stalin was interested in the work of German scientists and the benefits they brought us.

From a conversation with Comrade Stalin, it was clear that he clearly saw the difficulties associated with obtaining the first units, even with low productivity, since an increase in productivity can be achieved by increasing the number of units. 'Only the first step is difficult, and it is the main achievement.

Questions were asked about Ioff, Alikhanov, Kapitsa and Vavilov and the advisability of Kapitsa's work.

It was expressed (opinion?! - B.S./) for whom (they?/ - B.S./) they work and what their activities are aimed at - for the good of the Motherland or not.

It was suggested to write about the activities that would be necessary to speed up the work, whatever is needed. Which of the scientists should still be involved in the work.

A reward system... Cosmic rays and a cyclotron..."

Yes, the top of the nuclear project, academicians, directors, leading engineers and highly skilled workers rolled like cheese in butter. They were showered with bonuses, rations, special supplies, increased wages, for the most outstanding and irreplaceable - cars, dachas. Then, after a successful test of the "product" - orders, Stalin Prizes, titles, Stars of Heroes. Here are tens and hundreds of thousands of ordinary performers, including forced laborers - prisoners, soldiers, their material and living situation was worse than ever, and they slurped, even freemen, gruel no better than camp. And no one promised them dachas, apartments or bonuses.

Most importantly, after this meeting with Stalin, it became clear to both Beria and Kurchatov that funds for the atomic project would no longer be limited by anything. And they have the right to involve any scientists, any enterprises and institutions of the country in their work.

Obviously, after this meeting, Stalin decided to try once again to involve Kapitsa in work on the bomb. And then back in February 1946, the restless academician sent another letter to the leader, where he proposed to create a new institute for physical and technical research based on the following basic principles: "1) thorough

selection of the most gifted and creatively caring representatives of the youth; 2) direct participation in the training of leading scientists and close contact with them in their creative environment; 3) an individual approach to individual students with the aim of developing their creative inclinations in the absence of the current overload in universities with secondary subjects according to the general program and rote memorization ...; 4) in the conduct of education from the very first

steps in an atmosphere of technical research and constructive creativity, using the best laboratories in the country for this. "In this letter, Kapitsa did not directly touch on the atomic project, as if hinting that even without a bomb it could still be very useful. Although he understood that those who would be brought up in an atmosphere of "constructive creativity" will have to work on the bomb. And finally he waited for an answer. On April 4, 1946, Stalin wrote to Pyotr Leonidovich: "Comrade. Kapitsa! I have received all your letters. There are many instructive things in the letters - I think to meet with you somehow and talk about them..." However, the meeting never took place. Obviously, Stalin and Beria realized that Kapitsa would not make a bomb. And the fall followed. Already on May 14, Stalin, probably at the suggestion of Beria, signed a decree according to which his scientific opponents were sent to the government commission to check Glavkislroda, led by Kapitsa. On the basis of the quite predictable results of the commission's activities, on August 17, 1946, Stalin signed a decree relieving Kapitsa of his duties as chief of the Glavkislroda and director of the Institute for Physical Problems. It was revenge for the unwillingness to create nuclear weapons.

Unlike Kapitsa, other academicians and professors, who regularly received invaluable information obtained by atomic spies, worked both out of fear and out of conscience. The project captivated with its scale. How, then, to create something that one day will flash brighter than a thousand suns. And they had, as it were, a moral justification. Beria and his colleagues at the top of the project convinced the scientists that they were creating a shield that would ensure that the country would not fall on the American atomic sword. There was also a fear that in case of failure, if they did not shoot, then they would certainly be imprisoned. And there was a real danger, which at first was not suspected: radiation. Many scientists who participated in the creation of the Soviet atomic bomb died relatively young, including from the effects of radiation sickness. Kurchatov himself lived only to 57 years.

But many more victims were among ordinary, unknown participants in the project. Nuclear facilities were built by prisoners and soldiers, whose situation differed little from that of prisoners. The fighters of the construction units were recruited mainly from former prisoners and residents of the occupied territories. Under Stalin, they were considered second-class people, whose lives were worth almost nothing. During the war years, conscripts from the occupied territories were thrown unarmed into frontal fighter attacks on German positions. After the war, the survivors had to participate in a frontal attack on another front - the Soviet atomic project. One of the surviving soldiers, V. Vyshemirsky, recalled the construction of a radiochemical plant near Kyshtym (Chelyabinsk-40) in the Urals (the current NPO Mayak): "We lived at a construction site and in the open air, and

tents, and in dugouts, although in winter frosts reached forty degrees ... They burned the frozen ground with fires, gouged the rocky ground with picks. They were fed with frozen potatoes and cabbage ... To get an extra ration - an extra scoop of gruel and one hundred grams of bread - you need to exceed the norm, which was unbearable to master. The conditions were not much different from those in the camps, there were suicides among the soldiers. " Another survivor, A. Osipov, testifies: "People died in tens, hundreds - mouths of malnutrition and hard, exhausting labor."

And here is how the former soldier of the construction battalion A. Kharitonov describes the conditions at the Kyshtym construction site: "We lived there in dugouts, which included a whole company (in one dugout. - / B.S. /). We worked for 11 hours - from 8 in the morning to 7 evenings.

Once a lot of generals arrived - all so beautiful and pot-bellied. I thought: what do they eat if they are so pot-bellied? (I wonder if among those generals there was Lavrenty Pavlovich, who also had a fair belly? / - B.S. /)

We were always hungry, there was not enough food, the second norm (according to which the soldiers were supplied. - / B. S. /) was not designed for this hard labor, sometimes after work they simply fell.

Since 1949, the chimney of our facility began to smoke, the forest around became dead. The next year we were demobilized, but not released, only a year later I escaped from this hell. Few of ours survived, maybe the government will at least remember them?" But the government, neither then nor now, remembers the days of the living or the dead. It just so happened in Russia that everything new, starting with the imperial capital of St. Petersburg, was built on the bones.

N. Lapygin, an officer who worked on the construction of Chelyabinsk-40, is surprised at how low the mechanization of work was: "I was struck by the saturation of the primitive labor force at the construction site - if, according to the norms, a foreman is supposed to lead fifty workers, then there were two hundred more. to take by number, not skill. After all, the technical equipment was miserable - no lifting equipment, no earthmoving machines, everything was done by hand with little use of small-scale mechanization.

The buckets were manually loaded with heavy rocky soil left after the big explosion to form a pit for the reactor. Formwork was made by hand and filled with thousands of cubic meters of concrete. The thickness of the walls was huge - to protect against radiation ...

The money was spent on anything, but not on facilitating and mechanizing soldier's work.

However, once a terrible amount of equipment appeared at object "A" - where did they just catch up with it from? To my amazement, bulldozers and graders began to fill up trenches into which they had not yet finished laying communications - it turns out that Beria arrived, and the lackeys did their best for him ...

On another occasion, I was ordered to build a tent overnight out of prefabricated elements and upholstered in silk. The companies of soldiers and the crane operator Tanya did not spare. By five in the morning the tent stood, and at six Kurchatov arrived there and asked me:

- Aren't you tired?

- Front-line soldiers endure everything ...

- Yes, this is the second warrior for you...

And it also happened - on the RAM, the installers said that they were running out of stainless bolts. The former deputy minister immediately calls

Moscow and orders the manufacturer to send a car with bolts to the airport to be loaded onto the plane. And in the morning the car went from us to the Chelyabinsk airport. The bolts arrived on time, but were almost "gold".

I think that Lavrenty Pavlovich at that time noticed bullshit with technology - he had a trained eye. And the "gold bolts" did not please him - Beria's practical mind must have resisted such an irrational waste of scarce aviation gasoline. Yes, and hard labor, as the chairman of the Special Committee took off, is too inefficient and in fact does not have a significant impact on the timing of the completion of the atomic project. The timing was determined primarily by the success of intelligence and the brains of scientists. The realization of this led Beria after Stalin's death to the idea of a broad amnesty, which almost halved the population of the Gulag. The work of prisoners in the atomic age has become an anachronism.

They spared no money, they did not think about saving. According to the memoirs of the deputy director of the Kyshtym plant. V. Filippova, for excessive concern for production efficiency, the head of PGU Vannikov threatened his subordinates with the same punishments that he himself had once been threatened with after his arrest: "Vannikov left the office to the table, took off his jacket and carefully hung it on a chair. He took out a pistol from his back pocket and put it on the table. Opening the meeting, he proclaimed: "Well, fuck your mother, report!"

I "reported" first. One day I reported that due to design changes, the production of tanks was delayed. Vannikov immediately interrupted me: "When I was People's Commissar for Armaments and my chief engineer changed his mind to a more economical one, I ordered him to be shot..."

For breaking the schedule, Vannikov simply told the senior fitter Naft, taking a cartridge with a bullet out of the clip: "For this, it's a pity to spend even a small piece of lead on you ..."

Well, with whom you behave, you will gain from that.

Lavrenty Pavlovich himself, too, could screw in a strong word, and threaten to put it up against the wall. However, he understood that executions and repressions would not help in this case. If you withdraw the same I.V. Kurchatov and Yu.B. Khariton, who will make the bomb?

The same Julius Borisovich Khariton, the father of the Soviet atomic bomb, recalled Beria, in general, not bad: "Beria, I must say, acted on a grand scale, energetically, assertively. .

Never embarrassed to be rude and insult a person, Beria was tolerant with us and, it's hard to even say, extremely polite (I wonder how then the respected academician knew about Beria's rudeness, if Lavrenty Pavlovich himself never said a rude word to him? Maybe incredible Beria's rudeness and rudeness is, at least in part, a myth that was born after the fall of the "Lubyansk marttal" in 53? So Sergo Beria claims that in his presence his father never

material; however, under his son, Lavrenty Pavlovich could refrain from non-parliamentary expressions. - /ÿ. WITH./). If the interests of the cause demanded to go into conflict with any ideological moments, he did not hesitate to go for such a conflict. If Molotov had been our curator, such impressive successes, of course, would not have happened ... "

Kurchatov's deputy professor I.V. agrees with him. Golovin, who in his memoirs is generally inclined to represent Lavrenty Pavlovich as a demonic villain, repeats the myths existing around his name and in every possible way belittles the contribution of the former NKVD chief to the creation of the Soviet atomic bomb: "Beria was an excellent organizer - energetic and corrosive. If, for example, he took papers for the night, then by morning the documents were returned with reasonable remarks and practical proposals. He was well versed in people, checked everything personally, and it was impossible to hide mistakes from him ... "

With scientists, Lavrenty Pavlovich was polite and helpful. On the other hand, the officers and generals of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and state security who were in charge of organizing the work could sometimes be intimidated (it was much easier to replace these). Academician A.D. Sakharov recalled how once Beria reprimanded General of State Security I.E. Pavlov, who negligently disrupted the production of an important component of the hydrogen bomb: "We, the Bolsheviks, when we want to do something, turn a blind eye to everything else (saying this, Beria closed his eyes and his face became even more terrible). You, Pavlov, have lost the Bolshevik sharpness! Now we will punish you, we hope that you will correct the mistake. But keep in mind, we have a lot of space in the turma!"

And here is how Sudoplatov conveys his impressions of Beria's activities in the Special Committee Sudoplatov, who more than once participated in the meeting of this body, which had more rights in its industry than the Council of Ministers: "Meetings of the Special Committee usually took place in Beria's office. These were heated discussions. distribution of electricity, Pervukhin continued his attacks on Voznesensky, demanding an increase in the funds of non-ferrous metals for the needs of the chemical industry enterprises engaged in the production of nuclear fuel (previously, Pervukhin sought from Voznesensky to maintain the same volume of electricity consumption for the enterprises of the chemical industry headed by him and did not hesitate to raise his voice to member of the Politburo, at that moment - very close to Stalin. - / B. S. /). I was surprised by the mutual claims of members of the government. Beria intervened in these disputes, called Pervukhin and Voznesensky to order. And for the first time I saw that everything in this special government body considered themselves equal in official position, regardless of which of them was a member of the Central Committee or the Politburo ...

Only then did I realize what great interest and attention to economic issues and the development of industry Beria showed. I learned that Beria, as deputy chairman of the State Defense Committee during the war years, was responsible not only for the activities of the special services, but also for the production of weapons and ammunition, and the operation of the fuel and energy complex. In particular, he was interested in the issues of oil production and refining. There were mock-ups in Beria's office

oil refineries. On his initiative Vannikov,

Ustinov and Baibakov (they were not yet 40 years old) were promoted to high positions of people's commissars for the production of ammunition, weapons and the oil industry.

Participation in meetings chaired by Beria opened up a new world unknown to me. I knew that intelligence was of great importance in foreign policy, in ensuring the security of the country, but the restoration of the national economy and the creation of the atomic bomb were no less important. Until now, I remember our talented industrial organizers and plant directors who participated in solving the most complex organizational and technical issues. The development of these solutions turned out to be much more interesting than the management of an agent network in peacetime. Economic activity allowed people to show their talents and abilities in solving such problems as overcoming a lack of resources, disruptions in the supply of equipment and materials. It was no less difficult to organize the coordinated work of many industrial sectors for the implementation of the nuclear program, we feel the successful conduct of reconnaissance and sabotage operations (this is the recognition of one of the best experts in the world in terrorist attacks and sabotage, who personally destroyed the leader of Ukrainian nationalists Yevgen Konovalets and led the assassination operation Trotsky, is worth a lot. - / B. S. /).

Beria, rude and cruel in dealing with subordinates, could be attentive, whether courteous to provide daily support to people engaged in important work, protected these people from all sorts of intrigues of the NKVD or party authorities. He always alerted plant managers to their personal responsibility for doing the job right, and he had a unique ability to inspire people both in awe and inspire them to work. Naturally, for the directors of industrial enterprises, his personality was largely identified with the power of the state security agencies. It seems to me that at first fear prevailed among people (there is even a tale that one of the scientists, having once been called to Lavrenty Pavlovich, fell ill with "bear disease" with fear; when Beria noticed trousers that were not the right size on him, he understood everything and offered the scientist to come to the reception tomorrow, having approximately kept the diet; and if an incident happens even then, the head of the Special Committee threatened, the conversation will be different. - /B.S./). But gradually, those who worked with him for several years, the feeling of fear disappeared and confidence came that Beria would support them if they successfully completed the most important national economic tasks. Beria often encouraged, in the interests of business, the freedom of action of large business executives in resolving complex issues. It seems to me that he took these qualities from Stalin - tight control, exceptionally high demands and, at the same time, the ability to create an atmosphere of confidence in the leader that, if the task was successfully completed, he would be supported.

And why not assume that Lavrenty Pavlovich could not develop qualities so valuable for the leader of that era on his own, without looking back at Stalin?

Well, only Sudoplatov confirms that Beria widely used market methods in his work on the atomic bomb. So, at the criminal facility of the atomic project in Arzamas-16 (now the ancient name Sarov has been returned to the city), which was originally named for disguise

"Privolzhskaya office of Glavgorstroy, p / box 214", by a special decree of the Council of Ministers, almost capitalist orders were introduced. It was allowed to "perform construction and installation work without approved estimates and projects; pay for their actual costs; finance construction through the State Bank, without projects and estimates, at the actual cost; spend on bonuses up to 1.5-2% of actual costs" . S.V. Pestov commented as follows on this anomalous phenomenon for Soviet society in the second half of the 40s: "Construction was allowed not according to plans, projects, drawings and a lot of other papers, but according to the instructions of Zernov (Deputy Minister of Transport Engineering. - / B. S. /) and Khariton, who gave the task to the designers on the spot.

Such "anarchy", unheard of "sacrilege", downright real capitalism was allowed, they say, at the insistence of Lavrenty Pavlovich (there is not the slightest doubt about this, since all government decrees concerning the activities of the Special Committee were prepared by Beria and his apparatus. - / B. WITH./). Later, after Stalin's death, Lavrenty will be remembered for attempts to introduce capitalism in a single region and will be called a "bourgeois degenerate", but at the moment the practical and cynical Beria, spitting on "ideological values", followed the most effective and shortest path.

And although in February 1947, Zernov reported to the government that not a single production facility of the first stage had been completed, the construction of the facility was proceeding, nevertheless, very quickly, much faster than it would have been done in a planned manner.

If you look at it, there could be no question of any plannedness in the implementation of the atomic project, and Beria immediately understood this. After all, it was absolutely impossible to predict exactly what ideas Khariton and Kikoin, Zeldovich and Alikhanov would come up with tomorrow, what information the ubiquitous intelligence service would bring from America and England, and although this directly depended on what and how to build. I think that just while working on the creation of the atomic and hydrogen bombs, Lavrenty Pavlovich finally became convinced of the advantages of capitalism over socialism. Although the implementation of the nuclear project bizarrely combined market mechanisms with barracks coercion. The former acted among the upper echelons of the labor force - from scientists to skilled industrial workers and concerned the general principles of design and financing; The latter - among the masses of builders and mine workers, a significant part of whom were forced laborers - prisoners and soldiers mobilized in the occupied territories, i.e. , too, the people of the second class. There was no other way to quickly send large numbers of workers to carry out grandiose projects in the Soviet system. To endow hundreds of thousands and millions of volunteers with a long ruble, to promise them as an incentive to freely arrange their lives, to enrich themselves, as the late Bukharin used to say, would mean completely undermining

party monopoly on power. Those who have become rich will want to own land and start their own business. And then what will be left of public property? Beria also understood that here one could not break the butt with a whip, and to offer Stalin such large-scale reforms in the state meant to repeat the fate of Bukharin, the "favorite of the party," with guarantee. Therefore, let the prisoners work better

soldiers of the labor army. These workers in many ways resembled the forced builders of the Egyptian pyramids. But without them it was impossible to build the foundation and the lower floors of the atomic project in a short time, only relying on which it was possible to use priceless intelligence data and those who were destined for prizes and dachas, cars and orders could create ... Beria also understood this very well, and viewed as a necessary evil. And the builders involved in the most difficult work were expendable for him.

The combination of socialism and capitalism organized by Beria, unique intelligence data with the talent of domestic scientists or engineers, bore fruit in record time. And then came the long-awaited day of the first tests of the Soviet atomic bomb - August 29, 1949. The explosion occurred at the training ground near Semipalatinsk. Here is how Khariton remembered this day:

"The bomb was lifted to the tower by an elevator, they wanted to deliver people there separately, but Zernov could not stand it, stood next to the bomb, and so the two of them climbed the tower, then Shchelkin and Lominsky arrived there. They were the last to leave.

On their way there was a device to which it was necessary to connect wires, transmitting a signal to trigger the bomb - there was such an automatic machine that included a device to undermine the initiators located along the periphery of the charge so that a converging wave formed. The button of this device was pressed by Shchelkin, then everything was done automatically - capacitors were charged, in which the energy of undermining the initiators was accumulated, detonators, etc., were fired. e. And from this moment of pressing the button to the very explosion, I remember, forty seconds passed.

Well, after these forty seconds everything was lit up with the brightest flash. We observed it through the open (from the back side) door of the observation post, located ten kilometers from the epicenter. And thirty seconds after the flash came the shock wave, and you could go outside and watch the subsequent phases of the explosion.

Beria was also with us, he kissed Igor Vasilyevich (Kurchatov. - / B. S. /) and me - on the forehead (Lavrenty Pavlovich understood that failure - and there was a 5-6% chance that the device would not explode - could immediately make him, Khariton and Kurchatov, "enemies of the people" with all the ensuing consequences. - /B.S./). The brightest light and powerful shock wave were the best evidence that the power of the explosion was quite sufficient.

However, in the "memoirs" of some people who were not there at all, such details are described that it is simply amazing. For example, it is written that in the last seconds the neutron flux suddenly began to increase (this increased the likelihood that an explosion would not occur. - /B.S./), and everyone became worried. There really was a neutron counter, and it transmitted signals to the OP, but

there was no increase in flow. These are all fabrications, like many other "details" of those events..."

Khariton clearly meant Golovin's "Memoirs", who was not present at the tests, but described everything that happened in much more detail.

Julia Borisovich, as much as on seven pages of a book text. By principle - everything that was not with me, I remember. Here I will cite only those fragments of Golovin's "Memoirs" that are directly related to Beria, so that readers can trace how the myth of Lavrenty Pavlovich was constructed - a villain and a fool who did not understand anything in the entrusted business and found himself on a horse only thanks to the heroes-scientists and his to sensible deputies from the military-industrial complex, who were lucky enough to survive after the 53rd year:

"... The trolley with the product is slowly rolled out through the gate into the darkness of the night onto the elevator platform. - So it will go up unaccompanied? Beria exclaims. - No, no, - Zernov takes a step not provided for by the work schedule, stands on the elevator platform and, holding the crossbar with one hand, leaves in a picturesque pose.

Davydov had already begun counting the minutes when Beria arrived with his entourage. Kurchatov pulled himself together and stopped next to Flerov, observing the background of neutrons. Two or three neutrons in fifteen seconds. Everything is fine.

And suddenly, in the general silence, ten minutes before "one", Beria's voice is heard: - And nothing will work out for you, Igor Vasilyevich! - What are you, Lavrenty Pavlovich! It will definitely work out!" - exclaims Kurchatov and continues to watch, only his neck turned purple, and his face became gloomy concentrated.

In the third minute before the explosion, the background of neutrons suddenly doubled, in the second minute there was even more Flerov and Kurchatov looked at each other anxiously - the danger of a bang instead of an explosion increased sharply. But the automatic launcher works indifferently, it is impossible to speed up anything, and only Kurchatov has the power to cancel the explosion (in reality, only Beria could take the decision to cancel the explosion, and then only after agreeing it with Stalin in advance. - / B. S. /). - Ten seconds. Five seconds. Three, two, one, go!

Kurchatov turned sharply to face the open door. The sky has already faded against the backdrop of illuminated hills and steppe. Kurchatov rushed out of the casemate, ran up an earthen rampart and shouted "She!" waved his arms widely, repeating: "She, she!" - and enlightenment spread over his face.

The pillar of the explosion swirled and went into the stratosphere. A shock wave was approaching the command post, clearly visible in the grass. Kurchatov rushed towards her. Flerov rushed after him, grabbed him by the arm, forcibly dragged him into the casemate and closed the door. The rest burst into the casemate - discharged, jubilant. The chairman (Beria. - / B. S. /) hugged and kissed Kurchatov with the words: "It would be a great misfortune if it didn't work out !!" Kurchatov knew well what a misfortune it would be. But now all worries are over. Kurchatov and his team solved all scientific problems, successfully went through all the difficulties of the organization (it turns out that Lavrenty Pavlovich had nothing to do with the organization of work, Igor Vasilyevich pulled everything on himself ?! - B.S. /). WITH

Kurchatov's face instantly lost tension. He immediately became soft and as if embarrassed.

But Beria suddenly became worried. Did the Americans have such an explosion?

He immediately ordered that he be put on the phone with Meshcheryakov, who had been sent to observe the explosion at the northern observation post. In 1947 he was at the invitation of the Americans to Bikini and saw an American underwater nuclear explosion there. - Mikhail Grigorievich! Does it look like American? Very? We didn't screw up? Kurchatov doesn't rub our glasses? All the same? Fine! Fine! So, you can report to Stalin that the test is successful? Fine! Fine!

Beria gave the command to the embarrassed general, who was on duty at the telephone, to immediately connect with Stalin on the HF. In Moscow, Poskrebyshev answered the phone. - Iosif Vissarionovich went to bed, - he answered - It is very important, call him anyway. A few minutes later Beria answered a sleepy voice: - What do you want? - Joseph, everything is fine. The explosion is the same as that of the Americans. "I already know and I want to sleep," Stalin answered and hung up. Beria exploded and pounced with his fists on the pale general: - You are sticking sticks in my wheels here, traitors! I'll wipe it to powder!.. "It is easy to see that all the details invented by Golovin and missing in Bariton's story fully correspond to the mythological image of the cruel and suspicious villain that Soviet propaganda portrayed Beria after his fall. Lavrenty Pavlovich is taking completely senseless actions. Just in case, he encourages one of those present to accompany the "product" to the tower, standing in an absurd position on the elevator platform. Although there is no sense in such an escort, only a vain risk for the escort. Then Beria constantly does not trust Kurchatov, is afraid that the test will fail, at the last moment he loses faith in success. Here, according to the laws of a bad play, there is a sharp danger of failure due to the growth of the neutron background, so that later success can be felt more weightily. When everything is over, Beria kisses Kurchatov, but this is a Judas kiss, since Lavrenty Pavlovich still doubts whether this is a real explosion? Didn't Kurchatov swindle him? In the meantime, Beria is starting a stupid test, Stalin calls on the HF, learns from the general on duty that the bomb has exploded safely, and goes to bed. The villain Beria is disgraced: he failed to be the first to report to the Generalissimo about the historical event, and immediately there is no trace of politeness: Lavrenty Pavlovich attacks the innocent general with his fists. This is how the legends about Beria were born, which had very little in common with reality.

After the creation of the atomic bomb, Lavrenty Pavlovich, as head of the Special Committee, continued to lead the hydrogen project. By the end of his life, his marshal's uniform, in addition to the Golden Star of the Hero of Socialist Labor, was decorated with five Orders of Lenin, two Orders of the Red Banner, the Order of Suvorov 1st degree and three Orders of the Red Banner of the Union Republics - Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, recalled his first face-to-face meeting with Beria in 1950 while working on the hydrogen project: "He stood up, making it clear that

the conversation is over, but suddenly he said: "Maybe you have any questions for me?"

I was completely unprepared for such a general question. Spontaneously, without thinking, I asked: "Why do our new developments go like this?"

slowly? Why are we always lagging behind the US and other countries, losing the technical competition?

Beria answered me pragmatically: "Because we don't have a production and experimental base. Everything hangs on one Electrosila. There are hundreds of companies with a powerful base in the Americans" (Lavrenty Pavlovich, towards the end of his life, began to understand what strength lies in the competition inherent in capitalism of many production firms and scientific teams - /B.S./).

He gave me his hand. She was plump, slightly damp and deathly cold. Only at that moment did I seem to realize that I was talking face to face with a terrible person. Until then, it hadn't occurred to me, and I kept myself completely free.

I suspect that the academician, like the vast majority of Soviet citizens, began to consider Beria a terrible person only after the 53rd year. That is why it seemed to Andrei Dmitrievich at the time when he was working on his memoirs that the interlocutor's hand was cold, like the devil's. The first Soviet hydrogen bomb was tested in August 1953, after Beria's arrest.

It should be noted that during the period of leadership of the Special Committee, Beria did not forget about the prisoners of the Gulag, although he no longer had a direct relationship with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. So, on July 8, 1949, he sent a memorandum to the Bureau of the Council of Ministers, where, based on the data of the allied Ministry of Internal Affairs, he wrote with alarm: During the war, the average calorie content of a daily ration was 3,378 calories... In order to increase the productivity of labor of prisoners, the Ministry of Internal Affairs proposes to increase the norm of bread from 800 to 900 grams per day (against the pre-war 1,100 grams), and to restore the pre-war norm for other foodstuffs.

Of course, not only philanthropy forced Lavrenty Pavlovich to support the proposal of his former deputy S.N. Kruglov about improving the nutrition of prisoners. After all, many of them were employed in the construction of nuclear facilities, and a hungry worker will not earn much. But still, I think Beria was guided not only by pragmatic considerations. And he, and Malenkov, and Molotov, and Khrushchev, and Mikoyan, and the main criminal Stalin himself tried not to destroy people without need. In April 1941, Iosif Vissarionovich even blamed Nikita Sergeevich for vainly shooting the unfortunate Bukovinian peasants who were trying to escape from the Soviet paradise to Romania: "Shooting at people, of course, is possible, but shooting is not the main method of our work." All members of the Politburo willingly took care of people, especially when it cost them nothing, and Beria was no exception. And relatives, relatives and friends, as well as people necessary for the business, Beria sometimes defended at the risk, if not for life, then for his career.

In general, the Soviet atomic project, no matter how you evaluate it from a moral point of view - from the positions of Beria or Kapitsa, has become

an outstanding achievement of intelligence, scientific and technical thought and industrial production. Yes, the data obtained by agents was truly unique, which made it possible to reduce the time of creation

atomic bomb for 5-10 years. But in order to use them, the scientific, technical and industrial potential was needed, which the Soviet Union already possessed at that time. If we count from the moment when its practical implementation on an industrial scale began, i.e. since the creation of the Special Committee in August 1945, the creation of the atomic bomb took four years, i.e. almost as long as the Americans. In the United States, the "Manhattan Project" from the moment it entered the practical stage (conditionally abroad, one can accept the appointment of the military administrator General Leslie Groves as project manager on September 17, 1942) and until the first tests of the "Kid" in July 1945, a little less than three years passed. By the way, Groves and Beria can be somewhat likened to each other in terms of their functions. But Lavrenty Pavlovich, being a member of the Politburo and the government, had much more powers than the American general, who was completely dependent on the political leadership.

To lag behind the Americans by only a year in work on the development of nuclear weapons and to be on a par with them in work on thermonuclear weapons is, let us agree, an outstanding achievement in all respects. And first of all, Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria bears responsibility for it. But the conditions under which the atomic and hydrogen bombs were created in the USA and in the USSR were clearly not in favor of the latter. America mobilized not only its own physicists, but also scientists from almost all over Europe to participate in the Manhattan Project. Suppose, to some extent, this was compensated for by the Soviet side by the fact that it received through intelligence channels almost exhaustive data on American developments. But the economic potential of the two countries differed by an order of magnitude. According to my estimate (media published in the appendix the article "The Soviet Economy: Truth and Myth"), in 1983, on the very eve of perestroika, the US gross national product (GNP) exceeded the gross national product of the USSR by about six times, and Soviet military spending was about half of the GDP. Throughout the existence of Soviet power, the gap between the economies of the two superpowers only increased. It can be assumed that in the second half of the 1940s, the Soviet GNP was 4 or 5 times less than the American one, but at the same time, real military spending was, perhaps, even more than 50 percent of the total GNP. And, in turn, at least half of military spending was then directed to the creation of nuclear and missile weapons, that is, to the department of Beria. Lavrenty Pavlovich, thus, directed the development of at least a quarter of the entire Soviet economy, moreover, its best part, equipped with the most advanced technologies. At the same time, those who were not involved in the implementation of these main projects eked out a half-starved, beggarly existence, and during the post-war crop failures of 1946-1947 they literally died of hunger. Stalin then refused to buy grain in America, but the currency was unquestioningly issued for everything that was connected with the creation of the atomic bomb and missiles. "But we make rockets"

Of course, in post-war America, military spending was only a few percent of GNP. And during World War II, when the "Manhattan Project" was carried out, hardly a tenth of all American military spending was spent on the creation of the atomic bomb. The Soviet system showed the world its ability to mobilize all the human and material resources of the country in order to achieve military parity to the detriment of the standard of living of the bulk

population. Neither the United States nor other Western countries would ever make such sacrifices. Even in belligerent Germany until 1943 they tried to maintain as much as possible the pre-war standard of living and did not reduce the production of consumer goods. In the USSR, guns, rockets and atomic bombs were always preferred instead of butter. In the absence of internal opposition and the control of the party and the state over all spheres of life, this situation has been maintained for many decades.

NEW INTRIGUES, NEW REPRESSIONS

Focusing on the atomic project, Beria was temporarily sidelined from political issues. Stalin's new favorite was Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov, who became his de facto deputy in the party and chief ideologist. Zhdanov's nomination was facilitated by the marriage of his son Yuri with Stalin's daughter Svetlana. Stalin seriously considered him as his successor, hoping that, bound by property relations, Andrei Alexandrov would never do anything bad to Stalin's children. Together with Zhdanov, members of the "Leningrad team" came to the fore.

Alexey Aleksandrovich Kuznetsov, former 1st secretary of the Leningrad regional committee and city party committee, was promoted to secretary of the Central Committee in March 1946 and was appointed to oversee the MGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He also succeeded Malenkov as head of the Personnel Department of the Central Committee—close to the Leningrad group and, in particular, to Kuznetsov, Mikhail Ivanovich Rodionov, former secretary of the Gorky regional committee, in 1946 headed the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR Nikolai Alekseevich Voznesensky, whose career in 1935 -1937 was associated with Leningrad and which, thanks to the patronage of Zhdanov, at one time jumped from the post of chairman of the Leningrad planning committee to deputy chairmen, and then to the chairmen of the Union State Planning Committee, in 1947 was transferred from candidates to members of the Politburo. At the same time, the functions of the State Planning Commission were significantly expanded. However, Stalin soon became disillusioned with the new nominees. Zhdanov drank a lot, and in the last two years of his life was practically incapacitated. After his death, which followed in August 1948 on the basis of alcoholism, Stalin cracked down on the "Zhdanovites" in the leadership.

The first reason for the dissatisfaction of the aging leader was the All-Russian Wholesale Trade Fair organized in Leningrad in January 1949, at which they were going to sell the resulting surplus of industrial goods. It was organized on the initiative of Rodionov, Kuznetsov and Voznesensky without the sanction of the central party organs. The Bureau of the Council of Ministers allowed

holding only interregional wholesale fairs, and Rodionov and the Leningrad leaders made the fair All-Russian and only after the start of its work informed Malenkov about this. The Politburo condemned the holding of the fair. Stalin decided it was time to liquidate the "Leningrad group". In February 1949, a new signal followed: the Central Committee received an anonymous letter about fraud in the elections of the Leningrad regional party committee. At the Leningrad party conference, the leaders of the regional committee P.S. Popkov, G.F. Badaev, Ya.F. Kapustin and P.G.

Lazutin received several "no" votes, but it was announced that they passed unanimously. February 15, 1949. The Politburo adopted a resolution on the anti-party actions of the Leningrad party organization. Urgently arrived in Leningrad, Malenkov removed the entire local party elite. At a joint meeting of the bureau of the Leningrad city committee and the regional party committee, Georgy Maksimilianovich accused Popkov and his comrades of anti-party grouping and opposing the Leningrad party organization to the Central Committee, as well as in an attempt to create the Communist Party of Russia and thereby split the CPSU. At the same time, the patrons of the Leningrad leadership also fell into disgrace. In January 1949, Kuznetsov, and in March Rodionov and Voznesensky lost their posts. They were arrested only a few months later: Kapustin in July, and Kuznetsov, Rodionov and Popkov on August 13 - in Malenkov's office. Voznesensky remained at large until October 27. His arrest was preceded by a decision of the Plenum of the Central Committee of September 12, 1949 on the exclusion of Voznesensky from the members of the Central Committee and the need to bring him to justice for the loss of official documents when he was head of the State Planning Committee. In total, more than 1.5 thousand representatives of the Leningrad nomenklatura were dismissed from work in the "Leningrad case", of which several some people were convicted, and several dozen were shot. Voznesensky and his comrades were shot on October 1, 1950, after a short closed process. The indictment, drawn up on the basis of testimony obtained by Abakumov's people, and edited by Stalin, in particular, read: "Kuznetsov, Popkov, Voznesensky, Kapustin, Lazutin, Rodionov, Gurko, Zakrzhevskaya, Mikheev were found guilty of the fact that, having united in 1938 into an anti-Soviet group, carried out subversive activities in the party, aimed at separating the Leningrad party organization from the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks in order to turn it into a support for the fight against the party and its Central Committee. To do this, they tried to arouse dissatisfaction among the communists of the Leningrad organization with the activities of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, spreading slanderous statements, and expressed treasonous plans. They also squandered public funds (for the organization of the ill-fated Leningrad fair. - / B. S. .. /)". As for Kuznetsov, Stalin himself wrote in the text of the indictment the phrase that he, "having fraudulently made his way to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, planted his people everywhere - from Belarus to the Far East and from the North to the Crimea." Rodionov proposed to create not only the creation of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, but also to establish their own Russian anthem and flag - the traditional tricolor, but with a hammer and sickle. This was enough to attribute to the defendants "Russian nationalism", the intention to transfer

capital from Moscow to Leningrad and almost separate the Russian Federation from the USSR.

The real reason for the collapse of the Leningraders, as can be assumed, was their attempt to single out the Russian Federation within the USSR as the same union republic as Ukraine and Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Belarus, to transfer real power powers to Russian bodies, primarily party and government. Throughout the seven decades of its existence, the USSR held on thanks to the fact that the CPSU simultaneously played the role of the Russian Communist Party, and the Communist Parties of other union republics played the role of its branches. In fact, the Soviet state, which was federal in form, remained unitary in content thanks to the unity of the Communist Party. Allied Communist Party Secretaries

republics, which could be removed at any moment by a call from Moscow, did not have true independence in decision-making. And for the Russian Federation, in general, all any significant decisions were made in the allied Politburo, and the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR was only their executor, especially since only a small part of Russian industry was subordinate to it. It is no coincidence that the collapse of the USSR in 1991 came primarily because of the confrontation between the Russian and allied authorities. It can be assumed that Stalin foresaw the catastrophic consequences for the Union of Russia's desire for independence. Zhdanov and his people unwittingly encouraged such a desire by their actions. Iosif Vissarionovich really hoped that his heirs would at least keep everything that he managed to acquire - both the new borders of the USSR and a huge sphere of influence in Europe and Asia. The Leningrad team, as he understood, was not suitable for this purpose. She needed to be removed.

Stalin hardly suspected that Beria was hatching ideas regarding the state structure of the USSR, although they were opposite to those of the Leningraders, but if implemented, they could cause the same consequences - the collapse of the communist system and the collapse of the Union. Lavrenty Pavlovich was going to give more independence not only to the RSFSR, but also to other national republics, which could encourage them to separatism. In 1991, let me remind you, the catalyst for the collapse, along with the activities of the Russian leadership, was the proclamation

independence by the Baltic republics and Georgia and a strong independence movement in Ukraine.

There is no evidence that Beria played any role in the development of the "Leningrad case". Malenkov was directly involved in reprisals against objectionable officials from the "northern capital". But the fall of the Zhdanov team was, of course, in the hands of Beria, especially since his friend Malenkov was again in favor with the leader.

In early 1949, Stalin refused the services of the "Leningrad team". Again, Malenkov and Beria became the closest members of the Politburo to him. As a sign of special disposition, Stalin awarded Lavrenty Pavlovich in the 49th two Orders of Lenin at once - in connection with the 50th anniversary and for the bomb, for which he also awarded the Stalin Prize of the 1st degree.

Malenkov was almost officially considered the leader's successor. But the trouble is, the master of hardware intrigues, he did not possess any strong-willed

qualities or charisma. Beria, a career security officer and a strong business executive, had the will, but, unfortunately, he was a Georgian, and Stalin wanted his heir to be Russian and could rely on the most numerous people of the empire - in vain, or something, they fought with "cosmopolitans". Therefore, from the end of 1949, Stalin had another favorite - Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, who was appointed Secretary of the Central Committee and First Secretary of the Moscow Party Committee in December. He was Russian, he knew how to speak smartly, although not always competently, and win the love of the masses. Perhaps Stalin assumed that for the first time after his death, a collective leadership would be preserved, whose members would behave approximately like spiders in a jar. Well, may the best man win. And Iosif Vissarionovich determined the approximate composition of the participants in the posthumous tournament in October 1952, when

after the KhPKh Party Congress, he named the composition of the bureau of the Presidium of the PC, consisting of himself, as well as Beria, Bulganin, Malenkov and Khrushchev. Stalin determined the circle of heirs quite accurately. Since his death there has been only one significant change. Bulganin, who had little authority and was too close to Khrushchev at that time, was replaced by Molotov, which, however, did not prevent Nikita Sergeevich from gaining primacy and removing all other diadochi from the Presidium (Politburo).

Stalin appreciated Beria for his role in the atomic and hydrogen projects, but made it clear that he could easily get rid of him at any moment. In November 1951, a number of Georgian leaders who were previously close to Beria were arrested, who were accused of creating a "megrelo nationalist group" and the Central Committee Commission, which came to Georgia to remove Aksentiy Rapava, the Minister of Justice of Georgia, Secretary of the Central Committee Baramia and other members of the group, was headed by Beria. Stalin gave him another test: somehow Lavrenty would imprison his proteges. At the same time, Lavrenty Pavlovich's nephew Teimuraz Shavdia was arrested, who at the beginning of the war was captured, enlisted in the Georgian SS legion, and then deserted from there and fought in the ranks of the French partisans. Shavdia was given 25 years for treason, and his uncle could not help him in any way. And Beria's assistant and "speechwriter", Academician of the Academy of Sciences of the Georgian SSR, P.A., who was arrested in the same case. Sharia recalled in the late 1970s that the first charge against him personally was that "being a witness to how Beria criticized Stalin in a telephone conversation with Malenkov, Sharia did not report this to the Politburo". And according to F. Blagoveshchensky, the academician told him that in March of the 53rd "Beria personally went to the Lubyanka to liberate the Mingrelians; when everyone gathered together, Beria, laughing, reminded Sharia that he was planted by the one about whom Sharia wrote that he was the greatest genius of all times and peoples. And in a conversation with his cellmate in the Vladimir prison, dissident R.I. Pimenov, Sharia directly stated that "he was arrested in 1952 (together with Baramiya and other "Mingrelians") on a personal telephone call from Stalin, past Beria."

But Stalin did not touch Beria. Moreover, in February 1952, Lavrenty Pavlovich strengthened his position when V.S. Rjasnoy and S.A. Goglidze became deputy ministers of state security, party apparatchik S.D. Ignatiev.

And this is how the post-war struggle for power in the Politburo was seen by Vasily Stalin in the Vladimir prison on January 19, 1959, when, in connection with the start of the XXI congress, he wrote to the Central Committee of the Party: "I often had to deal with Malenkov, who was entrusted with the affairs of the Air Force: in 1941-1942-1943 and 1945, when the Central Committee removed him from patronage of the Air Force and the post of Secretary of the Central Committee for deceiving the Central Committee (in reality, Malenkov was removed from the post of Secretary of the Central Committee in 1945, and in 1946 in connection with the "aviation case", in which Novikov, Shakhurin and others were convicted. since he is "morally responsible for the outrages" that were revealed in the work of the aviation industry and the Air Force High Command - the production and acceptance of low-quality aircraft, and, "knowing about these outrages, did not signal them to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks" - / Kommersant. WITH./). I know for certain that Malenkov saw the possibility of his return to the post of secretary of the Central Committee in the so-called Leningrad case, and for this purpose created a case, distorted reality. Directly

speaking, on the bones of Leningraders with the help (very active) from Beria, he again took up the post of secretary of the Central Committee. In general, if you follow the course of the careers of Malenkov and Beria, it is easy to see how they pulled each other and helped out. Here is a rather characteristic fact of their mutual cooperation at the dawn of their mutual career even before the war. We are talking about S.F. Redens, one of the oldest Chekists of Dzerzhinsky. I knew him well, for he was the husband of my mother's sister A.S. Alliluyeva. When Beria was appointed to the NKVD, Redens was a hindrance to him in the positions of Chief. ex. The NKVD of Moscow, for Redens knew Beria from his work in the Transcaucasus from the negative side and was close to Comrade Stalin at any time. Beria decided to get Redens out of the way. When Beria spoke to Comrade Stalin about the need to arrest Redens (I happened to be at this conversation), Comrade Stalin sharply objected to Beria, and it seemed that this question would not be raised again. But, oddly enough for me, Beria was supported by Malenkov, Malenkov said that he knew Redens from his work in Moscow and supported Beria's opinion about the arrest. Now I don't remember who Malenkov worked at that time, but it seems that he was related to the cadres of the party (in 1938 Malenkov was the head of the department of leading party organs of the Central Committee. - / Kommersant S. /), because I remember the words of Comrade Stalin well : "Check carefully the cadres with the comrades in the Central Committee - I do not believe that Redens is an enemy." How Malenkov carried out this analysis in the Central Committee, I do not know, but the fact is that Redens was arrested. After the arrest of Redens at Beria's trickery, the entrance to our house was closed to Anna Sergeevna, but at her request, I asked Comrade Stalin to accept her. I was hit for this mediation and was told: "I did not believe Beria that Redens was an enemy, but the workers of the Central Committee say the same thing. I will not accept Anna Sergeevna, because I was mistaken in Redens. Don't ask again" ...

This is how Malenkov and Beria deceived Comrade Stalin and put honest people out of the way. The whole system of Beria and Malenkov was built on the principle - not our man should not be admitted to Comrade Stalin. A certain isolation was created so that any information to Comrade Stalin could only come through them or be controlled by them.

Due to the silence and unwillingness to spoil relations with Malenkov and Beria (many members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of that time, of course, could expose this couple), most often this deception came off

hands Whoever tried to object to Beria and Malenkov was removed, discredited or arrested.

Here is another fact of mutual assistance, in 1945, when it was proved by the facts of the Air Force that Malenkov was a liar, his confidence was shaken and he was dismissed from the post of secretary of the Central Committee. But because of the intercession of Beria, the final exposure of Malenkov failed. I am by no means a supporter of belittling the guilt of Shakhurin and Novikov, those lackeys of Malenkov, but Malenkov was rescued by their arrest. With this arrest, Malenkov, as it were, faded into the background and wriggled out, blaming everything on these people, removing the blame from himself. In 1953, while rehabilitating Shakhurin and Novikov, Malenkov completely consigned this case to oblivion - distorting the essence of the matter and exposing this entire group (and himself) as innocent victims. This is a vile lie! Malenkov was punished correctly, but not enough.

It is strange that Serov, who knew the case, blamed me during the investigation for wanting to discredit the honest Malenkov...?! Good honesty! This cunning combination (in 1945) of removing the main guilt from Malenkov - the arrest was subtly played out with noise and crackle by Beria and

Merkulov. Thus, Beria and company rescued Malenkov. Nevertheless, Malenkov was forced to quiet down. In addition, neither Malenkov nor Beria dared to fight Zhdanov. For Zhdanov enjoyed absolute trust and was infinitely respected. After Zhdanov's death, things changed. Malenkov again began to gain strength and, as I pointed out above, on the bones of the Leningraders he again became the secretary of the Central Committee. After the party conference in Moscow, when Popov (the first secretary of the Moscow regional committee and the city party committee in 1945-1949. - / B. S. /) behaved outrageously (being a delegate to the conference and a member of the Moscow City Committee, I told Comrade Stalin about many of Popov's tricks), t. Stalin made a serious remark to Malenkov: "How is it, in one city - you don't see it nearby ?!" Malenkov attacked me, but Poskrebyshev supported me, and Malenkov fell silent.

At the same time, Comrade Stalin said: "It is imperative to strengthen the Central Committee as a firm and honest person." After a short time, we (Muscovites) saw the secretary. MK N.S. Khrushchev, and the Central Committee received a firm and honest secretary of the Central Committee. From all this it is clear that Comrade Stalin had already ceased to trust Malenkov without limit, but Malenkov and Beria did not live to fully expose this man - they are one whole. Therefore, speaking of Malenkov, it is impossible not to mention Beria (almost like Mayakovsky: who is more valuable than mother history? We say "Malenkov", we mean - "Beria", we say "Beria", we mean - "Malenkov". - / B. S./). Approximately in the same period of time (comrade Ignatiev, who at that time was Minister of State Security knows the details), I handed over a letter to Comrade Stalin about problems (or rather outrages) in Georgia. In this letter there was a transparent hint at the role of Beria in these problems (Vasily really handed over to his father at the beginning of 1952 a letter received from Georgia and reported on numerous facts of corruption and theft. The same letter was handed over to Joseph Vissarionovich and daughter Svetlana. These letters gave a new impetus "Mingrelian case", indirectly directed against Beria. On March 27, 1952, the Central Committee adopted a resolution where it noted that the implementation of the resolution of November 9, 1952. "On bribery in Georgia and on the anti-party group Baramia" is

unsatisfactory. As a result, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia K.N. Charkviani lost his post. - /B. WITH./). In this letter there was a transparent allusion to the role of Beria in these problems. It got to the point that Comrade Stalin decided to go to Georgia himself and take a closer look - and he went (moreover, Beria wanted to go with Comrade Stalin, but he was categorically refused), but this time Malenkov rescued Beria. He flew to Borjomi and reduced everything not to a thorough analysis, but to the removal of Charkviani, which hushed up the case, which would lead to the exposure of Beria. These are all facts and easy to verify. Beria could not forgive me for interference in Georgian affairs, and Malenkov for the affairs of the Air Force and the Ministry of State Security, Popova was in full solidarity with Beria - hence their revenge on me. For Comrade Stalin began to check both Beria and Malenkov. Comrade Stalin's death saved Malenkov and Beria for a time from exposure, but exposure had to come, and it did. These are some of the far from complete observations of Malenkov's behavior as a communist and statesman. Lies, deceit, careerism and again lies are his horse.

I emphasize once again that Malenkov was one with Beria. I undertake to prove it anywhere. A few more words about Beria. To T. Stalin, I called him (and at Beria himself): a scoundrel, a liar, a hypocrite IT. D. - that is, he proved that he was a morally dishonest careerist.

I did not have the facts to express political distrust - I did not state this and did not assume. But in connection with the exposure of Beria as an enemy of the people, it seems to me that we need to look in a new light at the people who were his friends, and at the people whom he trusted ... "

Vasily created a legend about his father - a good genius who made mistakes and even crimes solely under the influence of the villains who had crept into his confidence - Malenkov and Beria. So Joseph Vissarionovich ruined his brother-in-law Redens, as if only on the slander of Beria. However, this is hard to believe. Yes, and it is unlikely that such a delicate issue as the upcoming arrest of a high-ranking security officer, Stalin and Beria discussed in the presence of 17-year-old Vasily, who had just entered the Kachinsk school. Iosif Vissarionovich was not the man to arrest his brother-in-law at the instigation of Malenkov or Beria. In fact, the fall of Redens began back in August of the 38th, and not so much because of enmity with Beria (which Khrushchev also notes in his memoirs), but because of proximity to Yezhov. Indeed, even at the February-March plenum of the Central Committee in 1937, Nikolai Ivanovich especially praised Redens for his help in the fight against "outrages" in the work of the NKVD. Already in January of the 38th, when Stalin began to gradually prepare for the cessation of the "great terror", Stanislav Fedorovich was removed from the post of head of the Moscow NKVD and sent to Alma-Ata as the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan. On the eve of November 19, when the Politburo discussed the statement directed against Yezhov by the head of the NKVD of the Ivanovo region, V.P. Zhuravlev (as a result, Nikolai Ivanovich was forced to resign), Redens was summoned to Moscow and arrested on November 20, 1938. But, perhaps, Vasily's letter still played some role in Khrushchev's decision to rehabilitate Redens as a victim of "Berievism". The corresponding decision of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR took place on November 16, 1961.

At the same time, albeit indirectly, Beria's positions were weakened by the wave of anti-Semitism that unfolded in the last years of Joseph Stalin's life in the USSR and the struggle for "Russian priority" in all areas of knowledge. The leader considered the Russian people as the most receptive to the ideas of socialism. If Stalin lived longer, we could well live the way North Korea lives today, which does not disdain grass from hunger. Beria, on the other hand, had many Jewish comrades-in-arms in the apparatus of the MGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, like S.R. Milshtein or one of the organizers of the assassination of Trotsky N.I. Eitingon. Almost all of them became victims of organ cleansing "according to the fifth point." Beria himself was accused by rumors of Jewish origin and patronage of national minorities. And the Minister of State Security of Georgia N.M. Rukhadze, who replaced Beria's devotee A.N. Rapava, sent a denunciation to Moscow that Beria was hiding his Jewish origin. True, fortunately for Lavrenty Pavlovich, Stalin did not believe this fantasy. And, unlike his friend Malenkov, Lavrenty Pavlovich had nothing to do with the fight against cosmopolitans.

The anti-Semitic campaign culminated in the trial of members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC). On August 12, 1952, 13 members of the JAC were shot in the basement of the Lubyanka, including the former head of the Sovinformburo Solomon Lozovsky, the poets Isaac Fefer, Leiba Kvitko, Perets Markish, David Bergelson, David Gofshtein, director Veniamin Zuskin, editors and translators of the Sovinformburo and JAC Ilya Vatenberg, Emilia Teumin, Chaika Vatenberg-Ostrovskaya, Leon Talmi, historian Iosif Yuzefovich, chief physician of the Botkinskaya

hospital Joseph Shimielovich. They were sentenced to death on July 18 for "unifying Jewish nationalists to fight against the national policy of the party and the Soviet state" and "spying for the United States." Deputy Minister of State Control Solomon Bregman did not appear in court due to severe heart disease. He died in the prison hospital on January 23, 1953. Their trial was closed and wrong, but it cannot be said that it was fast, and it lasted two months and ten days.

The JAC was created in February 1942, primarily to raise funds for the benefit of the USSR among foreign Jewish communities and to promote abroad the participation of Jews in the Great Patriotic War and the Soviet military efforts in general. Initially, Stalin hoped to use for his own purposes the prominent Bund figures Henryk Erlich and Viktor Alter, who ended up in the part of Poland annexed to the USSR and arrested by the NKVD. With the outbreak of the war, they were sentenced to death for their links with Polish intelligence and the "bourgeois-nationalist underground". However, on August 27, 1941, the execution was replaced by 10 years in prison. Beria invited them to cooperate with the NKVD, Alter and Erlich agreed and were released. Erlich was proposed to be made chairman of the JAC, Mikhoels his deputy, and Alter his executive secretary. In October 1941, a corresponding proposal was sent to Stalin. Without waiting for an answer, the Bundists launched a stormy activity. They got in touch with the diplomatic representatives of England and the United States, proposed the creation of affiliated anti-fascist committees for local Jews in the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition, and even the formation of the Jewish Legion in the United States,

which was then to be sent to the Soviet-German front. Erlich was going to go to London to become the Bund's representative to the Polish government-in-exile, and Erlich was going to the USA to form a legion. Neither Stalin nor Beria were going to tolerate such amateur performances. On December 4, 1941, both Bundists were arrested (they were summoned to the Kuibyshev department of the NKVD under the pretext that they needed to get acquainted with Stalin's answer to their letter). Alter and Ehrlich were accused... of spying for Germany. Solomon Mikhoels was placed at the head of the JAC on December 15, 1941. On May 14, 1942, Erlich hanged himself, and Altera was shot on February 17, 1943. Officially, it was announced that they were shot on December 23, 1941.

The creation of the JAC had no effect on the strengthening of state anti-Semitism. Already on August 17, 1942, the head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks G.F. Alexandrov sent to the secretary of the PC A.S. Shcherbakov's note, which expressed concern that "in the departments of the Committee for the Arts, non-Russian people (mostly Jews) turned out to be at the head of Russian art institutions ... In the Bolshoi Theater of the USSR, which is the center of the great Russian musical culture, the leadership is entirely non-Russian ... The same picture is in the Moscow State Conservatory ... All the main departments are headed by Jews ... It is no coincidence that conservatories do not instill in students a love for Russian music, Russian folk songs and most of our famous musicians and vocalists (Oistrakh, E. Gilels, Flisr, Le Gilels, Ginzburg, Fikhtengolts, Pantofel-Nechetskaya) have in their repertoire mainly works by Western European composers. Alexandrov suggested "developing measures to

training and advancement of Russian cadres" and "to carry out now a partial renewal of the leading cadres in a number of art institutions." These measures were carried out in the following months and years.

The JAC was supervised by Vyacheslav Molotov, whose wife, Polina Zhemchuzhina, was well acquainted with many members of the Committee and, according to the testimony of Israel's ambassador to Moscow, Golda Meir, showed interest in the ideas of Zionism. Molotov, after the war, fell into disgrace, and the JAC case became one of the ways to compromise Stalin, who became objectionable dignitaries.

The most serious action of the JAC was the proposal in 1934 to create a Jewish Autonomous Republic in the northern, steppe part of Crimea. Previously, Mikhoels and JAC Secretary Shakhno Epshtein discussed this idea with Molotov. Two possible territories for Jewish autonomy were proposed: the Crimea and the former republic of the Volga Germans. But Molotov rejected the Volga region, considering it politically incorrect that Jews would settle instead of the deported Germans. As a result of this conversation, Mikhoels and members of the JAC prepared an official letter to party and government authorities with a request to create a Jewish Autonomous Republic in the Crimea. The project to create a "Jewish California in the Crimea" was supervised by Beria's department. The calculation was that under it it would be possible to receive funds from wealthy Jewish communities in the United States, create an alternative to Israel for Soviet Jews, and at the same time create conditions for sending

agents to America along the "Jewish line". However, the letter had no result, since it contradicted both the general course of strengthening state anti-Semitism and Stalin's intention to replace the old team of Molotov, Malenkov, Beria and Mikoyan, who ruled the country during the war years, with a new, Leningrad team led by his own matchmaker Andrei Zhdanov, who made the fight against cosmopolitanism and "Russian priority" in the Soviet empire the core of the new ideological company.

Already on October 12, 1946, Minister of State Security Viktor Abakumov sent a note to the Central Committee. "On the nationalist manifestations of some JAC workers". Such an action could not be taken without the prior approval of Stalin. Arrests of Jews began, from whom testimonies about the anti-Soviet and nationalist activities of the JAC were beaten out. At the end of 1947, a relative of Stalin's first wife K.A. Alliluyeva testified that her acquaintance historian I.I. Goldstein is anti-Soviet. From Goldstein they received evidence against his acquaintance S.G. Grinberg, who, in turn, knew Mikhoels. He was arrested at the end of 1948 and, after intensive interrogation, testified that Mikhoels had told him in 1946 about his intention to use the marriage of Stalin's daughter Svetlana to the Jew Grigory Morozov to create a Jewish republic. Grinberg was also knocked out to testify that Mikhoels showed an increased interest in the leader's personal life, which was regarded as an intent to commit a terrorist attack. Stalin ordered the immediate destruction of Mikhoels. On January 13, 1948, the great director and actor head of the JAC Solomon Mikhoels was killed in Minsk by the MGB officers. The murder was staged as an accident - hitting a truck, but rumors immediately spread that Mikhoels had been killed. To switch the arrows, the MGB itself launched a rumor that the director was killed by "Polish fascists" (this version was also heard on

trial of 1952). Mikhoels, because of his popularity in the country and the world, decided to kill secretly, without trial.

On March 26, 1948, Abakumov submitted a note to the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers, where he claimed that the leaders of the JAC were conducting anti-Soviet and espionage work in favor of American intelligence.

On November 20, 1948, the Politburo adopted a resolution to dissolve the JAC. The Jewish theater and other Jewish cultural institutions and press organs were also closed. In late 1948 - early 1949, almost all the defendants in the trial of 1952 were arrested, as well as a number of other Jews from among the figures of science, culture, middle-level leaders of the Sinocracy. The investigators quickly managed to obtain the required testimony from the JAC Secretary Fefer, on which the entire prosecution was based. But the case dragged on for more than three years. The point, probably, was that at the top they could not work out a scenario for the future process. In addition, Abakumov was arrested in July 1951, in connection with which the team of investigators was replaced. A number of defendants have not admitted their guilt. An open trial made sense only if it was possible to convince at least part of the world community of the guilt of the JAC members. The accusations were simply ridiculous. Propaganda materials sent abroad, including those intended for the famous "Black Book" on the genocide against the Jews, were presented as

espionage information, and private talk about the growing manifestation of anti-Semitism in the USSR and about the possibility of forming a Jewish division to participate in the Great Patriotic War, and then - to fight the Arabs in Palestine - for anti-Soviet activities. The process was closed. Even before the start of the trial, on April 3 and 1952, the new head of the MGB, Sergei Ignatiev, presented Stalin with a draft sentence. It was proposed that all the defendants be shot, except for Academician Lina Stern, a prominent physiologist. She was scheduled to be exiled for 10 years. Stalin approved the verdict, reducing the term of Stern's exile to 5 years.

At the trial, Lozovsky, Shimielovich, Bregman and Markishd did not admit their guilt, however, the latter supported the accusations against other members of the JAC of nationalism and anti-Soviet activities, recalling that back in 1944 he filed a denunciation to the party organization of the Soviet Information Bureau about the nationalist and counter-revolutionary activities of the JAC leadership. But this did not save him, nor did Fefer, who actively cooperated with the investigation and the court. He, like Yuzefovich, stated that he was a secret informant for the state security agencies, which, however, did not save the unfortunate from execution.

The delay in the execution of the sentence may have been explained by the fact that several more trials of Jews were being prepared in parallel, including in the infamous "doctors' case." One of the defendants was supposed to be Polina Zhemchuzhina, exiled in February 1949. At the end of 1952, she was taken to Moscow. Probably, they were going to make Molotov one of the accused. JAC members could be left alive as future witnesses. Lozovsky, after all, was Molotov's deputy. But in the end, Stalin decided to shoot the unfortunate, believing that in future trials he would do without them. The trials of Jewish "bourgeois nationalists" were designed to help establish the Russian imperial consciousness, which Stalin expected

use to strengthen their power. In addition, the Jews were to become scapegoats for all the difficulties of post-war life. Only the death of the leader prevented the establishment of new political processes.

After Stalin's death, Beria achieved the rehabilitation of the Kremlin doctors and the deprivation of the awards of the MGB officers who killed Mikhoels. He also offered to rehabilitate those convicted in the JAC case, but the case stalled due to his arrest. The JAC members were rehabilitated only on November 22, 1953. The Military Collegium of the Supreme Court ruled that "some of the convicts, during their work in the JAC, assumed functions that were not characteristic of them: they intervened on behalf of the Committee in resolving issues of employment of persons of Jewish nationality, filed petitions for the release of imprisoned Jews from the camps, as well as in their separate in literary works, letters and conversations, nationalist judgments were sometimes allowed. Taking advantage of this, Abakumov and his accomplices elevated these actions ... to state counter-revolutionary crimes. " The board overturned the verdict "due to lack of corpus delicti". The resolution was not published in order not to give food to the "Zionists", and shifted all the blame on the already executed Abakumov, since open criticism of Stalin

hasn't started yet. Only after the names of Mikhoels, Kvitko, Fefer and other shot people were returned to print could people judge their rehabilitation.

"The fight against the cosmopolitans" unexpectedly brought certain benefits to Beria. Abakumov made a fatal mistake by torturing to death in a refrigerator chamber one of the "pest doctors", Yakov Gilyarovich Etinger, Beria's personal doctor, by the way. Etinger died on March 2, 1951. On July 4, 1951, Abakumov was removed from his post as Minister of State Security, and on July 12 he was arrested. The commission investigating the activities of Abakumov, consisting of Malenkov, Beria, M.F. Shkiryatov and S.D. Ignatiev was stated: "In November 1950, a Jewish nationalist was arrested ... doctor Etinger. During interrogation by the senior investigator of the MGB comrade Ryumin, arrested Etinger, without any pressure (beatings with rubber truncheons, of course, were not considered a serious means of pressure. - / B S./), admitted that during the treatment of Comrade Shcherbakov, A.S. had terrorist intentions against him and practically took all measures to shorten his life. The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks considers this recognition of Etinger worthy of serious attention. Among the doctors, there is undoubtedly a conspiratorial group of people who seek to shorten the life of the leaders of the party and government during the treatment (the aging Stalin increasingly thought about death and suspected that one of the doctors could artificially shorten his age. - / B. S. /). forget the crimes of such well-known doctors committed in the recent past, such as the crimes of doctor Pletnev and doctor Levin, who, on the instructions of foreign intelligence, poisoned V. V. Kuibyshev and Maxim Gorky (Vyacheslav Menzhinsky and Maxim Peshkov fell out of the list due to the insignificance of these figures from the point of view vision of the early 50s. - /B. S./) ... However, the Minister of State Security Abakumov, having received Etinger's testimony about his terrorist activities ... recognized Etinger's testimony as far-fetched and stopped further investigation into this case ... Thus, by extinguishing the Etinger case, Abakumov prevented the Central Committee from identifying an unconditionally existing conspiratorial group of doctors performing tasks

foreign agents for terrorist activities against the leaders of the party and government..."

Thus, Lavrenty Pavlovich got rid of a dangerous competitor in the struggle for control over the state security agencies. The new head of the MGB, Ignatiev, was Malenkov's man and has not yet shown hostility towards Beria. This allowed the latter to strengthen the central apparatus of the MGB with his people, although this was clearly not enough to establish control over it. But at least Beria could hope that the new minister would not dig against him, Beria, as Abakumov did, who even risked arresting some of the "Lubyansk Marshal's" mistresses.

DEATH OF STALIN AND BERIEVSKAYA PERESTROIKA

On March 5, 1953, after a three-day agony, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin died from the consequences of a stroke. The version that he was poisoned as a result of a conspiracy by Malenkov, Beria and Khrushchev, defended by many publicists, including Avtorkhan

Avtorkhanov in the book "The Mystery of Stalin's Death", is good for an adventure novel, but contradicts many firmly established circumstances of the leader's last days. In particular, there is no poison that provokes a stroke, and even one after which the patient lives for several more days. And the fact that Iosif Vissarionovich had a stroke is proved by the surviving journal of the disease and the later memoirs of the doctors who were at the patient's bedside. Too many people would have to be devoted to the secret of the assassination attempt in order to cover up the traces of a violent death. Just as important, none of the alleged conspirators, neither Beria, nor Malenkov, nor Khrushchev, controlled the Kremlin guards, which was an absolutely necessary condition for the success of the attempt to poison Stalin. Versions that they tried to bring Joseph Vissarionovich to a stroke, provoking a steam bath or adding dry wine, are too amateurish. In such cases, they never act at random: either they die or they don't.

I think that the very version of Stalin's poisoning was born under the impression of the "doctors' case". Stalin's comrades-in-arms are credited with translating into reality what they accused the arrested Kremlin doctors of.

After Stalin's death, a collective leadership came to power for a short time, consisting of Stalin's formal successor, G.M. Malenkov, who became chairman of the Council of Ministers; N.S. Khrushchev, who headed the work of the secretariat of the Central Committee, and two first deputy prime ministers - V.M. Molotov, who also took the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, and L.P. Beria, who headed the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which absorbed the MGB.

Khrushchev, in his memoirs, claims that Beria, in the course of dividing portfolios at Stalin's coffin, sought the post of head of the united Ministry of Internal Affairs. Sergio Beria disputes Khrushchev's story: "In March 1953, my father ... headed the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs ... My father had no desire to take this position. Unfortunately, in his sensational memoirs

Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev did not write how he spent several days sitting at our dacha, persuading his father after Stalin's death: "You must agree and accept the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We must put things in order there!" The father refused, citing the fact that he was overburdened with defense issues. But the Politburo still managed to insist on its own. The arguments of my father's opponents were no less weighty: he once did a lot to restore the rule of law in law enforcement agencies, and now the situation is the same and requires the intervention of a competent person. The father was forced to agree.

I think that all this was done with a long-term aim - to write off all the sins in the future on the new head of the punitive department. After all, it was necessary to somehow explain to the people both the pre-war repressions and the subsequent crimes of the System. And the father, as Khrushchev himself later admitted, really turned out to be a convenient figure.

Unfortunately, there are no documents to clarify the question of whether Beria himself really sought to become the head of the new united Ministry of Internal Affairs or agreed to this appointment only under pressure from other members of the leading four. There are reasons for both versions. On the one hand, Beria really could

strive to put under his control such a powerful tool as the punitive department. The post of head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs seemed to give him serious trump cards in the struggle for the redistribution of power within the Quartet. On the other hand, there were good reasons not to strive to take this chair, bearing in mind that almost all the predecessors at the head of the NKVD-MGB either died of natural causes (Yagoda, Yezhov), or by that time were in prison waiting for almost inevitable execution (Abakumov). Yes, and the immediate predecessor of Beria, the former head of the MGB Semyon Denisovich Ignatiev, was saved from repression only by the unfolding struggle for power. Lavrenty Pavlovich was determined, if not to shoot, then to imprison Semyon Denisovich for falsifying the "doctors' case" and the JAC case, but he did not have time. In addition, the Ministry of Internal Affairs itself, as before the NKVD, never took any serious actions. Such actions always required the prior approval of the highest political leadership, or rather, Stalin. Yes, and the "changing of the guard" in the punitive department, Joseph Vissarionovich spent as many as four times in his life, and there were no serious problems for the stability of his power. True, once at the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Beria could hope that this department would not act against him. However, the experience of the past showed that the leaders of the NKVD-MGB who had lost Stalin's trust were either first transferred to another, less significant post, and then arrested (Yagoda, Yezhov), or even immediately removed and arrested (Abakumov). The fact is that the leaders of the NKVD actually had no real choice. To refuse to obey the decision of the Politburo to remove them from their post was tantamount to declaring a rebellion. But the NKVD-MGB, with all the might of this department, did not have the strength for a coup d'état. The Red Army would have coped with the troops of the NKVD, and the Kremlin guards (in 1953, part of the Main Directorate of Guards), only nominally subordinated to the head of the punitive department, but in fact were controlled personally by Stalin. However, there is an important caveat to be made here. Such a situation with the punitive organs was preserved under Stalin, in the conditions of a rigidly established vertical of individual power. After his death, under the conditions of collective leadership, there was no one universally recognized

leader. There was an undercover struggle for power between the members of the Quartet. Here, such a strong department as the Ministry of Internal Affairs could acquire independent significance for some time, since there was still no effective control from above over its head, a member of the Supreme Four.

Of course, becoming the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Beria thereby lowered the role of the Special Committee, which faded into the background for him. But objectively, the role of this defensive monster was already coming to an end. The atomic bomb and the first combat missiles had already been created, and work on the creation of the hydrogen bomb in 1953 reached the finish line. Now the concentration of efforts to create the latest types of weapons no longer required the existence of a special department of the giant.

But for Beria, there were also serious arguments for not agreeing to the high post of head of the united Ministry of Internal Affairs. During those more than seven years when Lavrenty Pavlovich was not in charge of "expensive bodies", there were practically no nominees of his nominees there. To him

it was necessary to clean the department from the people of Abakumov and Ignatiev, especially in the field, and this required considerable time - several months, or even years. So for Beria, the Ministry of Internal Affairs could not become an effective means of fighting for power right away. In addition, in order to carry out the "changing of the guard" there, he had to take his people from the apparatus of the Special Committee to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which, in turn, significantly weakened this structure, which at that moment was quite effective and capable. Beria, if his son's statement is true, could well rely on the Special Committee as a means of his influence in the ruling "four". Especially if one of his people, Goglidze or Ryasny, could be placed at the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Lavrenty Pavlovich advocated an increase in the role of economic bodies and a corresponding weakening of the role of party bodies in solving economic, social and current political issues, offering the latter a common strategy and ideology. If his idea had succeeded, the Special Committee would have gained significant independence from party authorities. In the future, it was possible to subordinate all defense industries to it, and this is actually half of the country's economy. In this case, the binding of the activities of the Special Committee to specific projects for the development of nuclear, thermonuclear and missile weapons would no longer exist. Then, without an agreement with Beria, Prime Minister Malenkov would not have been able to take a single serious decision. Khrushchev, who oversaw the party apparatus, generally ran the risk of becoming largely a nominal figure.

It is possible that Sergo Lavrentievich's assumption is correct that Malenkov and Khrushchev initially prepared a political trap for Beria, offering him to head the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The purge undertaken by Lavrenty Pavlovich, as one can quickly and easily predict in advance, could not arouse enthusiasm among the overwhelming majority of high-ranking employees of the organs. Remembering the previous purges, they feared not only for their positions, but also for their lives. In addition, during the reign of Ignatiev, a colorless and dependent figure, many regular party workers were sent to the MGB apparatus, both in the center and in the field. Local party leaders, secretaries of regional committees and republics, saw their support in these nominees and were dissatisfied, when, at the suggestion of Beria, they began to be dismissed from the bodies. All this created as a series

conflicts in the Ministry of Internal Affairs itself, as well as an additional conflict between Beria and the party apparatus. And the party leaders in the localities were already dissatisfied with Lavrenty Pavlovich, who threatened to limit their omnipotence in the patrimonial regions. So at that moment, when Beria basically replaced the top of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but had not yet reached the lower levels, the most opportune time had come to accuse him of striving to plant his people everywhere in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. And this, in turn, could later be presented as part of a conspiracy to

seizure of power.

And the comrades in the Quartet, perhaps with secret intent, easily accepted the most liberal proposals of Lavrenty Pavlovich: to strengthen the role of Soviet bodies; on changing the national policy in Lithuania and Western Ukraine; to give greater independence to the Union republics and to enhance the role of national languages and cultures, as well as national cadres;

finally, the unification of Germany and its transformation into a neutral bourgeois state. Then, after the fall of Beria, they were easily abandoned, presenting them as the malicious intrigues of Lavrenty Pavlovich to restore the "bourgeois order." This helped to convince the broad nomenklatura public of the rebirth of Beria.

In transferring the Ministry of Internal Affairs into the hands of Beria, Khrushchev and Malenkov, in fact, risked practically nothing. Both first deputies of Lavrenty Pavlovich, Serov and Kruglov, were, respectively, creatures of Nikita Sergeevich and Georgy Maximilianovich. If suddenly Beria began to carry out some suspicious actions, his deputies would immediately inform their patrons about this.

I repeat, if Khrushchev and Malenkov originally had such a plan, then they must be recognized as remarkable masters of political intrigue. Others, however, simply could not survive until the end of Stalin's rule in the Politburo. But this is only a version, the confirmation or refutation of which is a matter for the future.

But could Beria have survived then, in the 53rd? Theoretically, it probably could. The most curious thing is that Lavrenty Pavlovich had every chance to save not only his life, but also a certain share of power. To do this, after Stalin's death, he had to not only not take over the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but generally refuse to join the notorious "four". It was also necessary to cede the Special Committee to someone, and ask yourself for a less significant post, even the chairman of the State Planning Commission, even the minister of the oil industry or medium engineering, motivating this, say, with health undermined during the war and years of work on the atomic project (one could even try to invent a disease in yourself). In this case, Malenkov and Khrushchev, Molotov and Bulganin, Mikoyan and Kaganovich, might have believed that Beria was not dangerous, would have left him alive, a few years later would have quietly taken him out of the Presidium of the Central Committee, and in a year in 1960, or, at the very least, in the 70s, they would have solemnly taken to a personal pension, like Mikoyan, on whom there was no less blood than on Beria. After all, Lavrenty Pavlovich headed the NKVD during the "thaw" period, he had nothing to do with the fabrication of political trials. He probably killed more people than the same Mikoyan or Khrushchev. After all, on the conscience of Nikita Sergeevich there were 55 thousand death sentences in Moscow alone, and about the same number in Ukraine. So

that in itself the former position in the NKVD did not predetermine the death of Lavrenty Pavlovich. He was destroyed by the itch of reformism

Maybe then Lavrenty Pavlovich would have written his memoirs. The scapegoat for the crimes of Stalin and the organs would then have been made by Abakumov alone, but Yagoda and Yezhov, shot back in the 1930s. But this option is purely speculative, having no chance of becoming a reality. Lavrenty Pavlovich was not such a person to voluntarily give up at least part of the power that he possessed. Moreover, then, in March 1953, he was hardly aware that Khrushchev, and even more so from his dear friend Georgy Malenkov, could pose a mortal threat to him and how events could end in just over three months. So in fact, after the death of Stalin, Beria was doomed. Opponents did not forgive him for the success of a good

an administrator capable of bringing to life projects that seemed impossible in the shortest possible time. Recall that while the atomic project was supervised by Molotov, there was almost no progress there, and only with the advent of Beria did the creation of a new superweapon really get off the ground.

The point of view that after the death of Stalin, Beria received very favorable positions for the struggle for sole power, was also adhered to by the writer Konstantin Simonov, in 1953 - a candidate member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. This is how he remembered Beria on the podium of the Mausoleum on the day of Stalin's funeral: "At the microphone, Malenkov in earflaps, and to the right of him between Khrushchev in a papakha pie and Zhou Enlai in a shaggy Chinese fur hat. Beria, heavily bursting with broad shoulders standing next to him, in overcoat, wrapped in a scarf that covers the chin, in a hat pulled down to the very pince-nez, a wide-brimmed hat, looking gloomy and purposeful, unlike anyone else standing on the Mausoleum. films that existed then, which appeared much later (dearest Konstantin Mikhailovich, drawing Lavrenty Pavlovich in the guise of a sort of "godfather", deliberately does not take into account the simplest explanation: it was very cold for the southerner Beria to stand in the March frost for several hours, so he wrapped himself in a scarf and pulled his hat up to his very nose. - /B.S./)... As the sequel showed, he hoped to come to power by the shortest route. These hopes were connected both with his long-term special position during the life of Stalin, and with the pre-prepared for this, personally devoted to him cadres of people who depended on him, one way or another wholly in his hands, and with his own nature as a determined and daring adventurer who managed for some time to turn the emerging situation of collective leadership in his favor. With a common determination to collectively replace Stalin, to work out compromise solutions acceptable to everyone, avoiding any internal clashes as much as possible, a man like Beria probably seized on the link that was beneficial to him in this situation. The more initiative he behaved, the more he put forward proposals, the more he speculated on the general unwillingness of the emergence of internal conflicts, the more successfully he achieved what strengthened his position and expanded his possibilities of seizing power for which he was preparing ...

Beria seizes on Malenkov (at the last party congress he made a report on behalf of the Central Committee and therefore was regarded as

legal successor to Stalin. - /B. S. /), obviously, together with him outlines the initial draft of future changes and at the plenum publicly nominates him for the post of Chairman of the Council of Ministers ...

There was another alternative: among the senior members of the Politburo (then - the Presidium. - / B. S. /) was Molotov, behind whom stood ten years of work as Chairman of the Council of Ministers and who, in the event of a separation of posts, if Malenkov went in the Central Committee for ... the post of General Secretary, replacing Stalin in this post, Molotov could replace Stalin as Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Molotov was popular, such an appointment would obviously have met with a positive attitude among the broad masses. But Stalin himself helped Beria in his last speech (at the plenum of the Central Committee,

held after the 20th Party Congress. - /B. S. /) for some reason of his own - maybe not entirely for our own, but for other people's insinuations that have become his - fell upon Molotov with such force that the appointment of Molotov is young one of the two posts occupied by Stalin, people who heard Stalin's speech would have been perceived as something directly opposite to his will. Why, then, was Beria interested in Malenkov becoming Stalin's heir precisely in the post of Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and the post of Stalin in the Secretariat of the Central Committee would be taken by a person, from the point of view of Beria, of a secondary scale - Khrushchev, whose personality and character Beria never figured out until the very day of your fall? And it's very simple. Beria's idea was to ensure that the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and his deputies played the main role in the leadership of the country, they also almost entirely made up the composition of the Presidium proposed ... by him and Malenkov. Thus, in the hands of the members of the Presidium, who at the same time constituted the leadership of the Council of Ministers, all power was concentrated in the strange Beria, who was the first to name Malenkov the future Chairman of the Council of Ministers, was immediately named Malenkov as the first of the four first deputies. The order in which people were named in such cases traditionally had the significance of the order of succession, that is, in the absence or illness of Malenkov, this order assumed that the first of his deputies named Beria would act as Chairman of the Council of Ministers ...

For some time before Stalin's death, Beria was not in the post of Minister of State Security, although he continued to practically supervise the Ministries of State Security and Internal Affairs to one degree or another. In recent months, an old party worker, Ignatiev, was appointed by Stalin to the post of Minister of State Security ...

Beria, as the first of the two first deputies of Malenkov, simultaneously became the head ... of the new Ministry of Internal Affairs, which also included the Ministry of State Security ...

So, Beria created in advance a position that was most convenient for seizing power and subsequent actions, the scale and nature of which, given the personality of Beria, would obviously be of a rather gloomy and global nature.

After the power was concentrated in the leadership of the Council of Ministers, and the Secretariat of the Central Committee was assigned secondary functions,

Beria is trying to achieve the transfer of the center of gravity of power in the localities, in the republics, from the Central Committee to the Councils of Ministers, and in several cases, in particular in Baku, achieves this. Then, in his capacity as Minister of the Interior, he puts forward the idea of an amnesty. At one time, at the end of the thirty-eighth year, Stalin appointed him instead of Yezhov, and the beginning of Beria's activities in Moscow was associated with numerous rehabilitations, termination of business and the return of tens, if not hundreds of thousands of people from camps and prisons - this was the role that he assigned then Stalin, and he played it according to all the rules of the game in the pre-war period. Beria remembered this and hoped that others would also remember it - in any case, he intended to revive it in people's memory. He hoped that he, the Minister of the Interior, would

efforts will be attributed to the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council on amnesty, according to which not only were released from prison sentenced to five years; also released were those convicted for economic, official and for a number of categories of military crimes. This event, in itself humane, was carried out unusually hastily - one gets the impression that later, under certain circumstances and with certain propaganda work in this direction, some of the released and unpunished could form a breeding ground to support him, Beria.

Simonov also believed that the publication in the newspapers of a decree on the rehabilitation of those arrested in the "doctors' case" and the Ministry of Internal Affairs' announcement on this matter was an integral part of the Beria conspiracy: "So, the former Ministry of State Security turned out to be guilty of all these sins, and the current Ministry of Internal Affairs exposed dark methods two days later, in the editorial of Pravda, it is explained that this happened primarily because the former Minister of State Security S. D. Ignatiev showed political blindness and mouthwash and was on the leash of criminal adventurers. Beria, as the head of the new Ministry of the Interior, exposed all these lawlessness."

But here Simonov exaggerates, exactly following the decision of the July 1953 plenum of the Central Committee, which exposed the "conspiracy of Beria." In fact, Lavrenty Pavlovich was excommunicated from the leadership of the state security organs before Stalin's death, not for "some time", but for seven plus years. Of course, at that time, as one of the leading members of the Politburo, Beria to some extent oversaw the MGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but he did not do it alone, but together with the same Malenkov and, before the fall of the "Leningrad team", with Kuznetsov. The new Ministry of Internal Affairs still had to be cleared of the people of Abakumov and Ignatiev for a long time before it would become an obedient tool in the hands of Beria. In the same way - and as attempts to put their people in power in the regions. To solve such a large-scale problem, Beria simply did not have the necessary personnel. Only in Transcaucasia, where he headed the party organization for a long time, did Beria have enough people. Therefore, he managed to carry out a change of personnel in Azerbaijan and, undoubtedly, he was preparing the same action in Georgia after the extraordinary 15th congress of local communists. frames.

As for the amnesty, the people immediately called it not

Beria, but Voroshilov, since it was announced on behalf of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and its chairman Voroshilov. There was a fundamental difference with the situation at the end of the 30s, when, eliminating Yezhov's "excesses", the convicts under investigation and released, whose cases were found to be falsified, were released directly by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, without any public decrees on amnesty. Then the truly released and their relatives could associate their release from the dungeons with the name of Beria. But the situation was completely different with the amnesty of 1953. Ordinary citizens were completely unaware of the decision-making mechanism in the Presidium of the Central Committee,

and were in no way aware that the amnesty was announced at the suggestion of the Minister of the Interior, Comrade Beria. It was only later, when Beria was arrested and his opponents began to criticize him for the negative consequences of the amnesty, expressed in a surge in crime, the name "Beria amnesty" was launched into the people and all the sins of the "cold summer of 1953" were attributed to Lavrenty Pavlovich.

The fact that the amnesty for prisoners was announced at the initiative of Beria could only be known or guessed by nomenklatura middle and senior officials. But it was precisely this amnesty that did not please them at all, since, with rare exceptions, none of the relatives and friends of party and Soviet officials fell under the amnesty (it was very difficult to hold on to a nomenklatura position with relatives who were imprisoned). On the contrary, the mass of former "zeks", who suddenly gained freedom, created many problems for the local authorities. They had to be employed, settled somewhere, and the police had more trouble. So the chiefs of different levels probably commemorated Lavrenty Pavlovich with an unkind word for the March amnesty.

In the same way, the rehabilitation of "doctors-pests" could contribute to the popularity of Beria only in very narrow circles of the intelligentsia, primarily Jewish. Given the large-scale anti-Semitic campaign under the banner of combating "cosmopolitanism" launched in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the anti-Semitism inherent in a significant part of the middle-level apparatchiks, the release of the "killers in white coats" could be perceived by a significant part of the public far not clear.

As for the general popularity of Beria in the country, Simonov cites one very characteristic fact on this score. It happened on the night after the arrest of Lavrenty Pavlovich Simonov then edited the Literary Gazette. At eleven o'clock in the evening, Vasily Petrovich Moskovsky, deputy head of the department for agitation and propaganda of the Central Committee, called him and ordered him to stop printing the newspaper before talking with him. The frightened Simonov thought that they were going to remove him from the editors, as he had once done before. But the matter turned out to be quite different. Here is how everything happened in the presentation of Simonov:

"Listen to me carefully," said Moskovsky, and switched to an official tone. "I have been instructed by the Central Committee to inform you, as the editor of Literaturnaya Gazeta, for your personal, only personal information, that Comrade Beria has today been withdrawn from the Presidium of the Central Committee, withdrawn from the Central Committee, expelled from the party, dismissed from the post of Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of the Interior

cases and was arrested for his criminal activities, - in an official voice, but in one breath Moskovsky blurted out all this to me, without even noticing that, out of ingrained habit, at the beginning of this message he forgot to remove the mechanically pronounced word "comrade" before the name of Beria.

"Sure," I said. - What happened? What happened?

- You will find out everything that happened ... at the plenum of the Central Committee, but for now, taking into account the fact that she told you, personally re-read all the pages so that there is nothing about Beria.

- There is nothing about Beria, where he comes from, - I said, remembering the weight of today's four-page newspaper. - We don't have any special materials, but where does it come from?

"I don't know where from," said Moskovsky. - I officially warned you, I don't have time anymore, I have to go further, and you re-read all the pages personally. And don't tell anyone. Clear?

- Clear.

So without telling anyone anything, I stood like a fool for another two hours at my desk, rereading all four pages on which Beria's name could appear only in some note on agriculture, where the collective farm or state farm of his name would appear. Noi didn't find that either, and by the middle of the night I had signed all the strips."

I suspect that on that night, if it was necessary to remove the name of Beria as strips in any newspaper, it was in Rural Life, where a couple of collective farms named after him could appear. Indeed, in the newspapers of that time there could not be a heading: "News from the Semipalatinsk test site" or "News from Arzamas-16". The extreme secrecy of what Lavrenty Pavlovich was doing excluded his wide popularity among the masses. How many people then knew the names of the "secret academicians" Khariton and Kurchatov, Bochvar or Zel'dovich?

Sergo Beria is right when he writes: "Information about the secret department of Lavrenty Beria could not reach the "lower classes." Father did not "flicker" like others, with speeches in newspapers, did not appear, with rare exceptions, at rallies, party assets and others mass events. And it's not just "secrecy" that matters. All this tinsel irritated him. His whole life was filled with concrete and very responsible business. It was like that before the war, and during the war, and after the war. He simply did not have time for mass events that the party elite adored ... Father appreciated every hour. In addition, Lavrenty Pavlovich preferred to spend his rare free hours not at gala evenings, but in the company of beautiful ladies. Probably, he also made love, like the current President of France, Jacques Chirac - according to the formula "five minutes, including a shower."

Therefore, Beria could not rely on popular support in the implementation of certain reforms. The people simply did not know him. And the fact that he sent his own notes, along with the decisions of the Presidium of the Central Committee in the party organization to the places, in itself could not contribute to the growth of Beria's popularity among the party nomenklatura. Rather, on the contrary, the reforms proposed by Lavrenty Pavlovich

were a sharp knife for party workers, as they limited their power, and only strengthened their hatred for the "Lubyansk Marshal".

It seems that during the years of leadership of the Special Committee, Beria somewhat tore off the notes of real life, getting used to the fact that both ministers and secretaries of regional committees unquestioningly carry out his orders, forgot that this was so only because Stalin stood behind him, and next to him, as one from the members of the Special Committee - Malenkov, who oversaw the party cadres. Maybe he thought that after Stalin's death he would be respected at least for having made the atomic bomb, and they would no longer be afraid, as the head of the punitive organs. But if not the broad masses of the people, then part of the nomenklatura and the intelligentsia

continued to be afraid of Beria. They knew that in addition to the "Beria thaw", when they released those who did not manage to be killed under Yezhov, there were also repressions of 1939-1941, and not only against Yezhov's associates, but also against the military and cultural figures, there were mass deportations to war, in which Beria was directly involved. Those who were closer to the top knew that in which case Lavrenty Pavlovich's hand would not falter, although without need and on his own initiative, without Stalin's sanction, he did not deduct anyone.

Simonov, in his memoirs, written down 26 years after Beria's arrest, certainly demonizes his personality, following the resolution of the July Plenum, which invented "Beria's conspiracy." But when he describes his experiences after the news of the fall of Beria, he probably also reflects the real fear of that time: "The main thing was the feeling of relief that something would not happen that could happen, everything remains the same. that Beria was close to Stalin, that one way or another, during all the times of his stay in Moscow, being engaged not only in the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the Ministry of State Security, or industrial, construction ministries, being a member of the State Defense Committee during the war, he always at the same time, he had some additional power as a person, either leading or supervising the intelligence and counterintelligence agencies - all this was known. And obviously, part of the authority he created for himself during the timely urgent fulfillment of certain state tasks in the field of industry (Simonov, who was present at the July Plenum, where Beria was exposed, knew perfectly well what kind of tasks Beria performed: he made an atomic bomb, but even in the 79th Beria's involvement in the atomic project remained a secret, he did not try to break it even in his memoirs, written during his last illness, five months before his death, and not intended for lifetime publication. - /B. S. /), was involved in the fear and trembling that such a combination of his instilled in people - this belonged to the number of circumstances that were not difficult to guess, and we guessed about them.

Given the position that Beria occupied under Stalin, the fact that he would be among the first persons of the state after Stalin's death seemed a matter of course. But the fact that he immediately became the second person and very active (in fairness, after all, not the second, but the third, if we consider the formal Stalinist successor Malenkov as the first, and the second - the leader of the party Khrushchev. - /B.S. /), the fact that no one else, namely he, proposed the candidacy of Malenkov, from this arose a feeling of some kind of danger. This